

DECEMBER 2007

# IN THESE TIMES

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BY JESSICA CLARK

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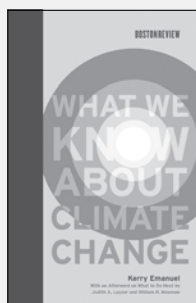


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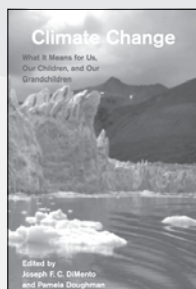


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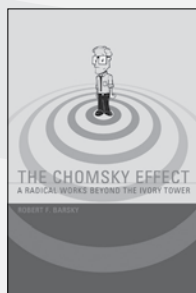


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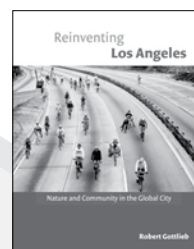
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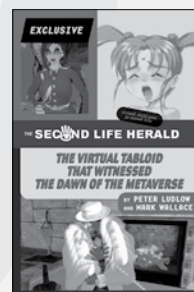


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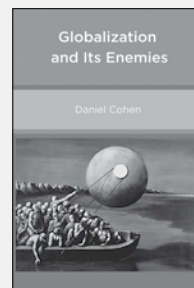
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## Treaty of Detroit Repealed

**I**N 1950, GENERAL Motors and the United Auto Workers (UAW) signed the "Treaty of Detroit." The landmark contract helped create mass prosperity and growing equality in America over the next two decades by setting a standard for other unions that even many non-union employers felt pressure to approximate. Workers shared in rising productivity, and unions shifted to employers many of the risks that come from life in a capitalist economy. The UAW won comprehensive health insurance, pensions, cost-of-living adjustments and income protection during economic downturns.

But the new contracts that the Big Three—GM, Chrysler and Ford—negotiated this fall effectively repeal that treaty. For more than three decades, auto executives, driven by the consequences of globalization and their own bumbling mismanagement, have attacked the treaty's principles. The new contracts demonstrate that companies without unions, global labor markets and corporate power are dictating the future for American autoworkers—even for those who are in a union. The result will be greater insecurity and inequality for all workers, not just for the dwindling ranks of UAW members.

Two provisions stand out. First, the Big Three shifted their responsibility for retiree health insurance to a union-administered Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association. That will likely shift future healthcare costs to retirees, given the unrealistic assumptions about its financing.

Second, companies will also pay newly hired workers in "non-core" jobs—which may account for as many as one-third of all jobs—approximately half of what current employees earn. What's more, all new hires will have inferior pension and health plans.

The contract thus undermines the Treaty of Detroit's principle of solidarity among workers, who all shared in the industry's productivity increases. In exchange, the UAW won provisions for new investment in many plants. Import-

tant as they are, these provisions do not guarantee jobs, as Chrysler and GM demonstrated by announcing plans to layoff thousands shortly after workers ratified the contracts.

This sad outcome reflects historic failures of Big Three management, public policy and the UAW leadership. Management, mired in a short-term strategy that believes big vehicles mean big profits, failed to produce the efficient and high-quality vehicles that consumers increasingly demand.

Public policy failed on many counts. The auto companies resisted legislation requiring higher fuel efficiency standards that would have helped them transition to a more secure future. Despite former UAW President Walter Reuther's prescient call in the '50s for a small, efficient car, the union sided with management on efficiency standards.

Meanwhile, our dysfunctional health-care system also hurt the Big Three's ability to compete against imports and the foreign-owned nonunion factories in the United States. Yet the auto companies never threw their weight behind a single-payer public health insurance system, even though they knew from their operations in Canada that it is efficient. And organized labor failed to lead in building a united health care reform movement.

Critically, the UAW did not organize the new auto parts and assembly factories, making it harder to maintain union standards. The UAW's task was made harder by labor's historic failure to organize the South, where many of the new factories operate. The government, too, hindered those efforts by not protecting workers' rights to organize.

Ultimately, the government and the UAW did not challenge corporate mismanagement enough to steer the companies toward the national interest. Now the new contract simply strengthens worrisome trends: fewer good jobs, more inequality and greater insecurity for workers—in the auto industry and beyond.

— David Moberg

# IN THESE TIMES

"With liberty and justice for all..."

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# mixed reaction

## JUST THE FACTS



**\$667** million: Amount Americans spent shopping online during the holidays last year on Dec. 13 alone.

**\$15.8** billion: Amount Americans spent on holiday decorations in 2005.

**\$7.4** billion: Amount Americans gave in private donations in response to the 2004 Indonesian tsunami, the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricane and the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, combined.

**43** Percent of American families that spend more than they earn each year.

“

Other than perhaps the rack and thumbscrews, waterboarding is the most iconic example of torture in history. It has been repudiated for centuries. It's a little bit disconcerting to hear now that we're not quite sure where waterboarding fits in the scheme of things.

”

—RETIRED REAR ADM. JOHN D. HUTSON, TESTIFYING AT ATTORNEY GENERAL NOMINEE MICHAEL MUKASEY'S HEARING IN OCTOBER

## LABANARAMA BY TERRY LABAN



## QUID PRO QUO

### THE QUID:

Thank Jeebus we have a Democratic-controlled Congress. On September 6, the House and Senate heard testimony from private equity and hedge fund executives about proposals to raise the tax rate on investment gains of fund managers from 15 percent to the ordinary income tax rate of 35 percent. One exec called the current 15 percent rate a “tax loophole the size of a Mack truck.” Surely the economic populists of the Democratic Party will close it?

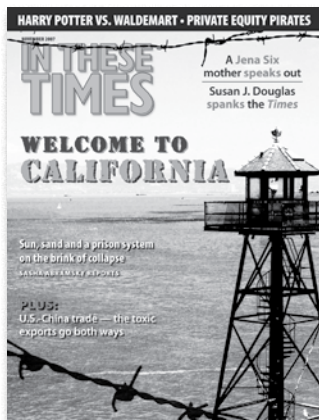
### THE QUO:

Maybe not. The Oct. 31 *Financial Times* reported on a recent party held by hedge fund lobbyists at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas on behalf of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's special fund to get more Democrats elected. Ending with a serenade by Barry Manilow, the gala seems to have done the trick: Reid has indicated that the bill to increase hedge fund taxes will not be put on the floor this session.



“Lobbyists,” the *Financial Times* dryly noted, “were anxious not to appear too gleeful.”

# letters



## Trouble in paradise

Ken Brociner writes in his article, “The Left’s Identity Crisis,” that “[Jerome Armstrong and I] vociferously denounce the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) for being too timid and centrist. Yet at the same time, they suggest that a return to the good old days of the DLC-aligned Clinton administration would be close to political paradise.”

I’d love to see a quote in the book where we advocate a return of the Clinton administration, because, quite frankly, none exists. Heck, throw in the over 4 million words I’ve written the past five years on Daily Kos and other media venues (plus however many Armstrong has written) and still, such a quote (or the words “political paradise” for that matter) does not exist.

*Markos Moulitsas  
Publisher Daily Kos*

## KEN BROCINER RESPONDS

Who authors choose to write the Foreword to their book is an important statement in and of itself. In the case of *Crashing the Gate*, Moulitsas and Armstrong chose Simon Rosenberg, a

political centrist whose enthusiasm for the Clinton administration seems to be boundless. In his Foreword, Rosenberg proclaimed that during the Clinton era, “Democrats demonstrated the power of effective, progressive governance. It is a record to be proud of.”

At no point in the 182 pages of text that followed did Moulitsas or Armstrong, in any way, distance themselves from Rosenberg or from what he had to say about the Clinton administration.

## Political leaders and FEMA say that they have learned from their previous mistakes. Have the people of New Orleans learned that they made the mistake of being poor?

Clearly, activists who hold such views are currently playing a critical role in the center-left, anti-Bush coalition that has formed in recent years. But when they declare themselves and/or their blogs (as Moulitsas and Armstrong have) to be at the cutting edge of “a new progressive movement,” they are not only adding to what I have called the “left’s identity crisis,” but, more importantly, are so diluting the actual content of the term “progressive” that it may come to represent nothing more than a mildly reformist approach to politics, rather than one that stresses the need for urgent and systematic change.

## Bummed out

In October 2007’s Appalo-Meter, the description in the entry “Cripes, What a Race!” Dave Mulcahey referred to two men murdered by white supremacists as

“unfortunate bums.”

Isn’t there a less pejorative word? Destitutes? Homeless alcoholics?

“Bum” makes me think that Mulcahey doesn’t get out there among “them” enough. It was a bad choice of words.

*Britt Leach  
Via e-mail*

## Living while poor

In her November column “Droppin’ a Dime” Laura Washington commented on Chris Rose’s writings on the

I was impressed with how comprehensive the reporting was.

However, the article focused on the causes of the California prison crisis, but not so much on the possible solutions, other than the seriously flawed prison expansion program that the state proposes in AB900. If you would be interested in a prisoner’s analysis, I may be able to get access to a typewriter.

*Robert J. Hesit II  
#F11404  
Avenal, Calif.*

## Change for the worse

David Moberg needs to go to the rank-and-file and listen to some of the “changes” carpenters union president Douglas “Cash” McCarron has driven down our throats (“Has the Change Led to Wins?” November 2007). For example, we have no right to vote for our business agents or our secretary treasurer—offices with the real power in the union.

At the last United Brotherhood of Carpenters convention, the “delegates” were asked to contribute \$100 to McCarron’s campaign fund. Approximately 15 percent of the delegates were members of the rank-and-file. The other 85 percent were staff members.

*Jerome Johns  
Charter Member  
Millwrights Local 1548  
Baltimore, Md.*

## CORRECTIONS

In China Mieville’s “Floating Utopias” (October 2007), the editors failed to include citations of the work on seasteading by Patri Friedman, whose essays can be read at [patrifriedman.com](http://patrifriedman.com).

# contributors

## Dear Reader,

With this issue Christopher Hayes (see his handsome mug to the right and read his review of Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* on page 38) departs the *In These Times* masthead. He has appeared on our pages since November 2003. In October, Chris was named Washington, D.C. editor of *The Nation*, replacing David Corn who moved to *Mother Jones*. We wish him the best and congratulate our friends at *The Nation* for their good fortune.

Speaking of good fortune, members of the *In These Times* community will soon be getting our annual anniversary fund appeal in the mail. For 31 years, *In These Times* has relied on your support.

Thank you in advance.

—Joel Bleifuss

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**CHRISTOPHER HAYES** is the Washington, D.C. editor of *The Nation*. A former senior editor at *In These Times*, his essays, articles and reviews have appeared in a wide-variety of independent publications.

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Benton Harbor residents picnic at the Jean Klock Park on Lake Michigan.

WWW.SAVEJEANKLOCKPARK.ORG

## Saving a Public Park

### Benton Harbor citizens fight to stop Whirlpool's luxury golf course

BY PAUL STREET

**B**Y MOST MEASURES, THE citizens of Benton Harbor, Mich., are not materially wealthy. The city's residents are predominantly black—92 percent—and the median family income is \$19,250, barely two-thirds of the minimum basic family budget, as calculated by the Economic Policy Institute.

One of the few sanctuaries for the city's working-class residents is Jean Klock Park, a popular public beach that offers spectacular views of Lake Michigan. But if the city's other large constituency, the home appliance manufacturer Whirlpool Corporation, gets its way, the park will be turned into a private golf course.

Whirlpool, its developer allies and their front group, known as the Cornerstone

Alliance, have persuaded city commissioners to approve a plan to turn the park into three holes of a "Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course." The City of Benton Harbor approved the "conversion" without meaningful citizen input last January. The golf course would be attached to Harbor Shores, a proposed \$500 million development with 850 housing units, two hotels, four marinas, a water park and commercial and retail space.

Turning the public park private is essential, insists course designer and golf legend Jack Nicklaus. After visiting Benton Harbor last August to see the projected site, Nicklaus claimed that it would be impossible to attract golfers without the marvelous lake vistas afforded by the enclosure of the park. "If you took Pebble

Beach's ocean holes away," Nicklaus explained, "it would be just another golf course. ... To not use the lake or some of that area, you would lose 90 percent of your power to attract people."

John Nellis and Carrie Klock would not be pleased. In 1917, they purchased and then deeded a pristine 90-acre parcel of Lake Michigan frontage property to the City of Benton Harbor. The terms of the deed required that the property be used exclusively and forever as a public park. The land was dedicated "for the children" and named in memory of the Klocks' deceased daughter.

Benton Harbor residents have long used the park as a gathering place for family reunions, church picnics and baptisms. Many in the local black community see it as a place where residents of the city's hard-pressed neighborhoods can get away and commune with nature. According to local resident Emma Kinard, the park is "a beautiful gift that was given to us ... [to] see the beauty of what God has created."

The pro-development *Midwest Real Estate News*, on the other hand, referred to the park last July as "an underutilized Lake Michigan beachfront gem" that is "fairly isolated" and has "developed a reputation as a site for dogfights and drug deals."

Besides killing a public space for the town's residents, Whirlpool's proposed golf course would be an ecological disaster that would destroy important dunes, habitats, marsh and wetlands. Marshes and wetlands, especially, play a vital role in filtering and purifying groundwater, containing erosion and preventing floods. The golf course would also pour a steady stream of noxious, nitrogen-intensive fertilizer run-off into local water supplies.

For more than a year, Benton Harbor activists and environmentalists have worked to convince Michigan's Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm to intervene against Whirlpool. Despite her self-professed environmental credentials—she proclaimed April 20 "No Child Left Indoors Day"—so far, she has not. Instead, Granholm told activists last December that the proposed park "conversion" (privatization) is "a local matter" and therefore beyond her purview. At the same time, as the *Detroit Free*



Press recently reported, "the state has offered funding and tax incentives worth more than \$120 million to the developer, Harbor Shores."

Desperate for jobs and revenue, Granholm has been selling the state's soul to business interests. She has supported environmentally disastrous sulfide mining in the Upper Peninsula and, in central Michigan's Mecosta County, she has repeatedly acted on behalf of Nestlé Corporation's right to pump millions of gallons of spring water out of natural water basins.

As for Whirlpool, the corporation has rewarded the governor nicely with campaign contributions. During the 2006 election cycle, Granholm received approximately \$10,000 from top Whirlpool executives, including \$3,400 from CEO Jeff Fettig and \$3,400 from retired Whirlpool CEO and current Harbor Shores Board President David Whitwam.

Whirlpool insists that its development is about helping the community and ending the intense local poverty. In June 2003, Benton Harbor's economic desperation sparked major riots that brought unwelcome national attention to the city.

Harbor Shores and the Cornerstone Alliance claim that the golf course is about "urban renewal." But the Whirlpool Corporation's decision to move most of its manufacturing to southern states and overseas in the last third of the 20th century has contributed significantly to the economic misery.

From a peak of 2,400 jobs in Michigan in the late '60s, Whirlpool's manufacturing workforce has been slashed to 300. Few of the jobs projected to arise from Harbor Shores will go to Benton Harbor residents, and especially not to the city's young black males. Local activists have discovered that turning Jean Klock Park into a golf course has been, in the words of Michigan Radio reporter Vincent Duffy, "the dream of Whirlpool executives and developers for more than a decade."

That "dream" is currently on hold, thanks to an Oct. 16 decision by the National Park Service. The park received a past federal grant under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, that gives the National Park Service authority to approve or deny park conversion for non-public use. The federal agency determined that Benton Harbor did not

make provisions for adequate replacement, or "mitigation," land to make up for the appropriation of the park.

Although local activists and environmentalist allies are pleased with the decision, they say it's too early to proclaim victory. Benton Harbor activist Carol Drake puts it this way: "Harbor Shores will stop at nothing to control Jean Klock Park."

Granholm is lobbying the Park Service for a deal to let the golf enclosure go through. A Granholm spokesman recently told *In These Times*, the governor thinks there are "no insurmountable barriers" in Harbor Shores' conversion proposal. And Benton Harbor's Rep. Fred Upton (R-Mich.), who happens to be a direct descendant of Whirlpool's founding family, has issued statements saying he will appeal the National Park Service decision.

"We are disheartened," Drake says, "that the governor is working in the interests of Cornerstone Alliance and Harbor Shores but not the public and the children of Benton Harbor." ■

**PAUL STREET** is a researcher, author and activist in Iowa City, Iowa. His latest book is *Racial Oppression in the Global Metropolis: A Living Black Chicago History* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

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## INKBLOT PROJECT

Painful life experiences have long been the inspiration for art. In that vein, the Chicago-based Inkblot Project is transforming the stories of survivors of sexual assault and incest into works of fine art. "We try to take a dark subject and turn it into a beautiful painting, much like the survivors need to do with their own lives," says Misha Shebesta, founder of Inkblot.

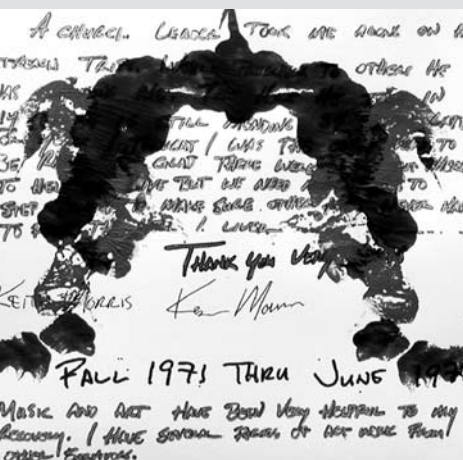
Survivors fill out a simple form where they can tell their stories or share ways they have coped. Shebesta then applies their words—in their own handwriting—on an inkblot image that is then matted and framed. The images are being shown at clinics and galleries around the country, and 25 percent of proceeds will go directly to the sexual assault crisis center where the participant first heard about Inkblot.

Shebesta says the idea was partly inspired by the AIDS quilt. "We're trying to take a more open approach to education and awareness," she says, "to make it something that people can wrap their heads around."

The project also strives for gender inclusivity. It is starting to get almost as many male participants as females. "It's not just a female problem, it's a societal and educational problem," says Shebesta.

To participate in the project, purchase an image or see a schedule of upcoming exhibits, visit [www.inkblotproject.org](http://www.inkblotproject.org).

—Chelsea Ross



## El Salvador's Patriot Act

ON JULY 2, Salvadoran police arrested 14 rural activists who were protesting water privatization in Suchitoto, a colonial town in the middle of the country. The government plans to try them on Feb. 8 under the country's new anti-terrorism laws, which could make them the first political prisoners in the nation's post-war era.

In recent years, the Salvadoran government has faced increasing community resistance to the privatization of healthcare and water. Citizens have also protested against Pacific Rim, a multinational corporation that plans to develop the El Dorado mine in Cabañas province and pollute the local water supply.

In response, in October 2006 the government adopted a "Special Law Against Acts of Terrorism," which gives police and judges leeway to clear the streets of demonstrators and imposes mandatory sentences of 60 years for what was once considered a freedom of expression. Intentionally vague, the law defines terrorism as crimes that "by their form of execution, or means and methods employed, evidence the intention to provoke a state of alarm, fear or terror in the population, by putting in imminent danger or affecting peoples' life or physical or mental integrity, or their valuable material goods, or the democratic system or security of the State, or international peace." According to Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, the Salvadoran government modeled the new anti-terrorism law after the U.S. Patriot Act.

A small international outcry by those organizations followed the July arrests, and the government released the activists after nearly a month of imprisonment (though they still face trial in February). But instead of loosening their grip, in August, President Antonio Saca and his ultra-right-wing Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) Party pushed through penal code reforms by a one-vote margin that changed disorderly conduct from a misdemeanor to a felony. Three weeks later, the government arrested eight leaders of a nurses trade union for striking against the privatization of healthcare services and lack of medicine. If convicted, the union leaders could face eight years in prison under El Salvador's new "Patriot Act."



Protesters march in front of a court in San Salvador on July 7 to demand the release of 14 rural activists accused of terrorism.

"The objective of these anti-terrorism laws isn't to fight terrorism, because there haven't been acts of terrorism here in many years," says Pedro Juan Hernandez, a professor of economics at the University of El Salvador and an activist. He recently traveled to the United States with members of U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities to bring attention to the Salvadoran social movement. "What happened in New York and in Madrid were acts of terrorism," says Hernandez. "But it's not an act of terrorism to peacefully mobilize or concentrate a group of people demanding their rights, including what's written in the constitution." He says the new law's objective is to "criminalize the social movement and imprison community leaders."

In July, 60 U.S.-based organizations signed an open letter to Saca that appeared in the Salvadoran press. "While the Salvadoran government has the task of ensuring public security, charging demonstrators under an 'anti-terrorism law' ... does not appear to be the measured response of a government seeking to maintain order while observing basic civil rights, such as the right to freedom of association and the right to protest," the letter stated. A month later, 41 members of the U.S. Congress also signed and sent Saca a letter that expressed concern about the arrests of the 14 activists under the new anti-terrorism laws. Predictably, the White House and the U.S. Embassy in the capital city of San Salvador have remained silent.

That silence might stem from El Sal-



vador being a member of the “coalition of the willing” that has supported the United States in its invasion of Iraq. Saca has contributed as many as 380 soldiers at any given time to the war effort.

Meanwhile, \$461 million goes to El Salvador through the Millennium Challenge Account, an aid program that President Bush announced at the Inter-American Development Bank in 2002. This money goes to the Central American nation despite the challenge account’s criteria that countries adhere to the “rule of law,” “political rights,” “civil liberties” and “voice and accountability.”

Sixteen years ago, the government of El Salvador signed the Peace Accords with anti-government FMLN guerrillas, ending 12 years of a brutal civil war that killed approximately 80,000 people. The accords were established “to create the necessary conditions to improve the quality of life of the population, especially of those living in extreme poverty.”

But more than a decade-and-a-half later, the country’s poor remain choked by desperation. Almost 50 percent of the rural population lives below the poverty line and 61 percent have no access to water in their homes, according to USAID. The average Salvadoran child attends only 3.4 years of school. Remittances from the 2 million Salvadorans working in the United States account for approximately 17 percent of El Salvador’s economy, according to the U.S. State Department. This is greater than the money generated by any other export.

“The signing of the Peace Accords created the opportunity for reconciliation and to change the causes that led to the armed conflict,” says Hernandez. “But we’ve missed out on that opportunity. In the last 16 years, the government has implemented neoliberal economics, privatized services and signed free trade agreements that haven’t solved the economic problems but have made them more profound.”

The Salvadoran social activists fighting for water access, healthcare and education, and now the right to protest, have seen enough war, says Hernandez. “But the origins of the violence are in the politics, the unemployment and the government’s policies against the population,” he explains. “We are back to the level we were when the armed conflict began.”

—Jacob Wheeler

## Air Polluters Sail the High Seas

**A** THREAT TO THE world’s atmosphere is sailing the high seas, but activists say government regulators are letting the culprit off the hook.

The global shipping industry coughs up millions of tons of air pollution each year, yet its emissions are for the most part unregulated, aside from minimal international standards. Now, environmental groups are turning the country’s seaports into a fresh battleground in the climate-change debate, demanding that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rein in marine engines under the Clean Air Act.

The environmental law firm EarthJustice, Friends of the Earth and other advocacy groups are taking action to compel the EPA to set comprehensive restrictions on the air pollution that clouds U.S. harbors. In a recently filed lawsuit and administrative petition, environmentalists argue the Clean Air Act mandates the government to confront health-damaging soot as well as greenhouse gases emitted by shipping vessels.

Though cars and industrial plants are more notorious for contributing to global warming, cargo ships are also heavyweight polluters. Researchers with the German Aerospace Center and University of Delaware estimate that ocean ships dump between 600 million and 900 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually. That’s comparable to the total yearly emissions of countries like Germany or Canada.

“Ships have traditionally gone below the radar, in part because they’re kind of ‘out there,’” says Jackie Savitz, pollution campaign director with the environmental organization Oceana. “We rarely drive by them on our way home from work.”

But ship smokestacks loom large in the warming atmosphere. The industry’s fuel consumption could soar by more than 70 percent between 2000 and 2020, according to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a policy-making body that sets international pollution guidelines. Big ships also annually spew tens of thousands of tons of “black carbon,” or heat-trapping soot, and about 27 percent of worldwide nitrogen-oxide emissions. One EPA study projected that in the United States alone, nitrogen-oxide emissions from large ships would nearly triple from 1996 to 2030.

Environmentalists say the federal response

to the problem has been glacially slow. In 2003, following a legal challenge by environmental groups, the EPA set a mandatory April 2007 deadline to establish standards for large vessels under the Clean Air Act. But the agency recently pushed back the process until late 2009, claiming it needs more time to collaborate with the IMO in revising global emission limits. The International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT), an advisory organization, recently reported that current international standards for nitrogen oxide and other pollutants “merely codify existing industry practices.”

Danielle Fugere, Friends of the Earth’s



**Tug boats work the waters in the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro, Calif.**

global-warming program director, says federal regulators can still take action while international negotiations are pending. “EPA can’t pawn off its duties under the Clean Air Act to some international body,” she says. “It has an obligation to protect the U.S. citizens and to regulate industry to protect our air quality.”

In deferring to international authority, the EPA stresses that most ships entering U.S. ports are based out of foreign countries. However, according to legal analyses by the European Commission and ICCT, national and state governments have regulatory powers over both foreign and domestic ship pollution within territorial waters. E.U. nations have accordingly initiated plans to restrict emissions surrounding their ports.

California has followed suit, issuing landmark rules last year to cap pollution from ships in local waters. Meanwhile, in Congress, pending bills introduced by Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Rep. Hilda Solis (D-Calif.) set goals for emissions reductions and cleaner fuels for all vessels operating in U.S. harbors.



Even some industry interests concede they have escaped regulation for too long. Joseph Cox, president of the trade association Chamber of Shipping of America, a trade association, acknowledges existing IMO regulations “are not strong enough,” and that shipping companies prefer, a long-term, “uniform national standard” over patchwork of localized state rules.

Various solutions abound for curbing air pollution. Ships could use cleaner-burning fuel, rather than the typical sulfur-laden diesel known as “bunker oil,” which can be about 1,800 times dirtier than standard highway diesel. More energy-efficient vessel designs and speed limits would streamline fuel consumption. Internationally, regulators could implement global pollution caps as well as emissions trading for ships.

“The shipping industry has been able to get away with operating without regulations, and without having to internalize the cost of the impacts that its activities have on these communities,” says EarthJustice attorney Sarah Burt. “The EPA’s regulation of pollution from these ships is long overdue.”

—Michelle Chen

## Public Libraries For Profit

**I**N LATE OCTOBER, Jackson County, Ore., re-opened the doors to 15 of its public libraries after a lack of funds had forced them shut on April 6—the largest library closure in U.S. history. However, as patrons returned to the bookshelves in the southern Oregon county, they learned that their libraries are now under private, for-profit management.

Oregon suffered a \$150 million budget shortfall—and Jackson County a \$23 million loss—in fiscal year 2007, after the federal government failed to renew a \$400 million annual subsidy designed to help rural communities suffering from the decline in timber-logging revenue. Though Congress eventually extended the funding by one year, Jackson County commissioners, strapped for cash, voted to outsource library services to the Maryland-based Library Systems & Services (LSSI), which specializes in library management. Founded in 1981, the company initially operated federal libraries during President Reagan’s era of privatizing

government services and contracts. LSSI now privately manages more than 50 public libraries nationwide.

Companies like LSSI focus on counties that are desperate to keep their public agencies afloat but lack sufficient funds to do so. In the case of Jackson County, officials offered LSSI a five-year contract worth \$3 million annually, with an additional \$1.3 million reserved for building maintenance. The deal cuts in almost half what the county previously spent.

Public libraries in Dallas, Riverside, Calif., and Finney County, Kan. have also hired LSSI staff.

But the trend of farming out public libraries to a private, profit-oriented business has raised concerns. For one, private companies are not subject to the same oversight as are public institutions. More importantly, libraries have long been considered democratic bodies built on the cornerstone of information diversity, transparency and intellectual freedom.

“Libraries tend to reflect the communities they serve,” says Lorie Roy, president of the American Library Association (ALA). “[They] respond to community

## appall-o-meter

### 2.5 It’s all Better With Slavery

The search goes on for ways to make U.S. history relevant for American schoolchildren. We can safely exclude the approach used at Grover Cleveland Middle School in Caldwell, N.J.

According to reports in the *New Jersey Star-Ledger* and a local CBS affiliate, teachers presented students with the following hypothetical situation: They had just built a new plantation in the antebellum South, and it was clear that slave labor would be necessary to save the enterprise. The students were to devise an advertising campaign, complete with a catchy brand name, a snappy slogan, illustrations, and three reasons why using slaves was the right decision to make.

After parents complained, school administrators hastily kyboshed the project, which inexplicably was being repeated for a second year.

### 4.3 C’mon, Boys, Time Fer Fag-Baitin’

It’s election time in old Kentucky, and we all know what that means. Shadowy GOP operatives are busy robo-calling

honest church folk to spook ‘em with tales of uppity negroes, nefarious homosexuals, shadowy terrorists or some unholy combo of the three.

This gem (posted on TPM Election Central) purports to be a call from a gay rights group on behalf of the Democrat who currently leads in the polls by 20 percentage points:

“For the first time in 20 years, the homosexual lobby proudly endorses a Kentucky candidate for governor: Steve Beshear. Beshear is receiving major support from out-of-state gay activists and has publicly committed to same-gender relationships, employment of more homosexuals in state government including teachers, and support for homosexual adoption of children.”

### 4.9 Poor Li’l Banana Company

Chiquita Brands International, the Cincinnati-based banana giant, has admitted that, between 1997 and 2004, it funneled



\$1.7 million to the right-wing paramilitary organization Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), reports *USA Today*. Company officials claim they had to pay to protect their workers and facilities from being attacked.

But in 2003, Justice Department officials told Chiquita to halt its monthly payments to AUC, which had been labeled a terrorist organization.

Nevertheless, the company continued payments into 2004. At the time, the company’s operation in Colombia was its most profitable.

“Chiquita’s money helped buy weapons and ammunition used to kill innocent victims of terrorism,” the Justice Department stated in court filings.

The company has agreed to pay a \$25 million fine and institute an ethics program to prevent future violations. Families of 173 Colombians murdered by death squads have sued Chiquita.

—Dave Mulcahey

needs and they do so within their budget, but they are not set up to make profit. A company coming in that doesn't exist within the community that is profit-making, you can see that there is a different attitude and there is concern about that."

Under public management, transparency tends to be clear. As much as 80 percent of public library funding can come from local tax support, making libraries accountable to a board of trustees with representatives from the community.

While municipalities have for years contracted "non-library services," such as janitorial duties or photocopying, the outsourcing of "core" library services—cataloging and use of automated systems and material acquisition—has increased.

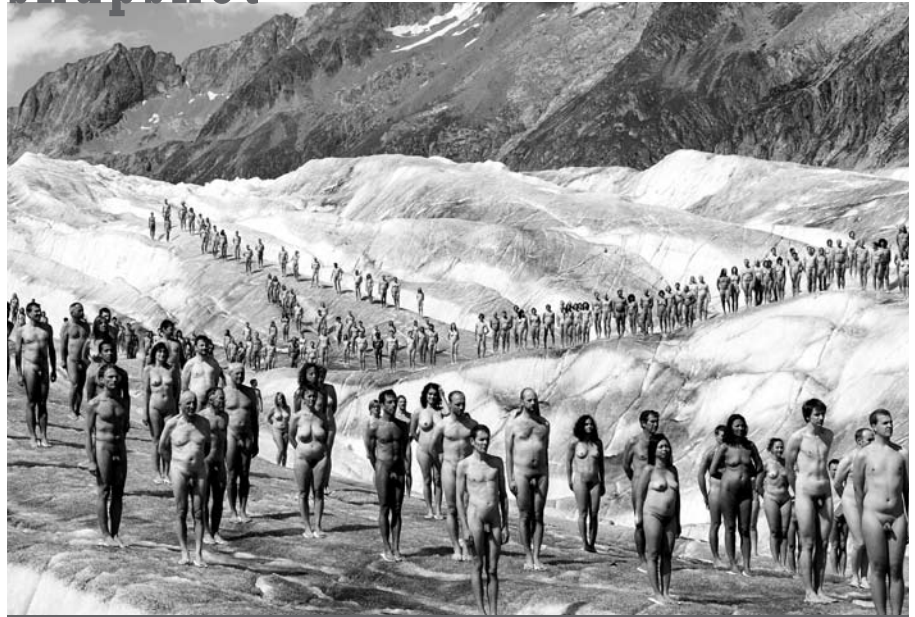
This prompted the ALA to create an Outsourcing Task Force and conduct a study on privatization in 1999. Two years later, the ALA council adopted a stance opposing outsourcing, stating that libraries are "not a simple commodity" but "are an essential public good" that should be "directly accountable to the public they serve."

LSSI makes its money from the difference between the budget and what it spends—or does not spend. It typically downsizes staff, centralizes accounting and human resource services, and buys books in bulk, all while passing down administrative costs—sometimes as high as 15 percent—to patrons as general handling fees. (The company does not disclose its earnings.)

"They operate entirely with our tax dollars but they have no transparency," says Buck Eichler, president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 503 in Jackson County, whose organization represented the public library employees. "They're completely secretive about their books. We no longer know where our tax dollars are going."

Although the total cost of running the libraries was cut, so, too, were library hours. Now, most libraries in Jackson County are open at half the normal operating times and are closed on Sundays, totaling only 24 hours a week, down from the 40-plus hours before the April shutdown. The exceptions are the libraries in Ashland and Talent, which will stay open for 40 hours and 36 hours a week, respectively, after local residents recently voted in favor of a levy on monthly utility surcharges in order to

## snapshot



**Naked volunteers pose for American photographer Spencer Tunick and take a stand against global warming on Aug. 18 on the Swiss glacier of Aletsch. The campaign, organized by Greenpeace, aims to draw attention to melting Alpine glaciers as a sign of global warming and man-made climate change. (Photo by Fabrice Coffrini/AFP/Getty Images)**

pay for the extra hours.

While counties still own the buildings and retain control of library policies, LSSI is in charge of hiring employees, which has caused mixed reactions.

"I don't have any problems with it at all," says Kim Wolfe, manager of the Medford branch. "I think it's a personal decision for each individual. The community is thrilled to have the libraries opening again. They're thanking us and they're glad they can come in and use our services."

SEIU's Eichler, however, has said some workers have refused to go back to work under a private employer.

"We don't want to sacrifice living wages at the expense of workers," says Eichler.

LSSI brought back about 60 of the 88 people who were laid off, according to one library staffer. But now that they are no longer union employees, they've been subject to contractual changes in rights, benefits and disclosure information.

Although salaries are comparable to what they were before, employees in the Jackson County Libraries are now no longer part of Oregon's pension system, which has been replaced with a 401(k) program. Medical benefits have also been

cut, and salary levels have been "adjusted depending on market conditions," says Anne Billeter, a former Jackson County library manager.

"I'm not saying that LSSI has a goal of union-busting, but it is certainly the net effect," says Eichler.

Some areas have seen a backlash. In Bedford, Texas, after a community-wide petition campaign to oppose library outsourcing gathered 1,700 signatures in four days, city council members voted 4-3 to reject privatization in August. "If our library dies, this community dies," said Mark Gimenez, a local resident who attended the board meeting.

But not every public library is celebrating victories. In Jackson-Madison County, Tenn., even after a community group lobbied against privatization, the Tennessee Court of Appeals ruled in April that the county board has a legal right to outsource.

Thomas Hennen Jr., director of the Waukesha County Federated Library System in Wisconsin, says, "It is the urgent duty of public librarians to put the 'good' back into the 'public good' of the public library movement."

—Akito Yoshikane

BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS

## Tax and Spend? Hell, Yeah!



**I**HAVE A PROPOSAL for the next Democratic debate—hell, the next Democratic and Republican debates: Get rid of the TV personalities and have Paul Krugman moderate the thing.

That way, “Meet the Press” host Tim Russert won’t be asking Rep. Dennis Kucinich if he’s really seen a UFO, or Sen. Barack Obama if he believes in E.T.s. And NBC anchor Brian Williams won’t be asking Obama what he plans to be for Hal-

loween. (And why is *that* what he asked the black guy?)

All Krugman would have to do is ask questions based on his important new book, *The Conscience of a Liberal*, which unabashedly calls for a new New Deal and for “expanding the social safety net and reducing inequality.” He argues that the central danger confronting us is the ongoing transfer of wealth to the very rich, which has led to massive economic and political inequality.

This has been the determined and successful agenda of the neocon movement. But with all their “free market” mumbo jumbo, neoconservatives make the rise of the super-rich seem inevitable. If hedge fund managers and Wall Street traders making anywhere from \$50 million to \$1.5 billion a year is simply the natural order of things, then what can the rest of us do but be fatalistic? Well, Krugman is here to lay out what should be the Democratic platform.

First, tax these bloodsuckers. Why does anyone need \$50 million a year? What do you do with it—buy five houses in Aspen like Enron’s Ken Lay did? Krugman provides a historical overview of the role that taxes played in reversing the Gilded Age’s concentration of wealth among the super rich from the 1930s through the ’70s. But the Reagan and Dubya tax cuts “delivered disproportionately large benefits to upper-income households.” Clinton raised taxes on the rich, but the economy—and the rich—did just fine in the ’90s.

Second, boot those tax cuts. Krugman reports that if the Bush tax cuts for the very rich expire in 2010—as they are currently slated to do—there would be an additional \$140 billion rolling into the national treasury by 2012. That’s enough to implement universal healthcare.

Third (and how’s this for a winning proposal), eliminate the loophole that allows hedge fund managers to classify their earnings as capital gains, which are taxed at a 15 percent rate instead of the normal 35 percent.

Possibly one reason some American corporations pay their CEOs obscene money and pornographic severance

packages is the decline in corporate tax rates. Taxes on their profits have fallen by a quarter over the past 30 years, and additional loopholes let corporations avoid taxes by shifting their recorded profits to branches or operations overseas.

What’s the first thing we should spend this revenue on? Healthcare. That’s because healthcare is one of the principal—and very expensive—areas of inequality in the United States. While Rudy Giuliani brays that we have the best healthcare system in the world, Krugman compares U.S. per capita spending with Canada, France, Germany and Britain. Guess who spends the most? And guess who has the lowest life expectancy? In fact, the World Health Organization ranks the U.S. healthcare system 37th in the world.

Krugman debunks the usual trash one hears neocons spouting about universal healthcare, including the bogus

scare tactics about “long waits,” and argues that, in economic terms, single-payer is the way to go. It has low administrative costs and enables bargaining over prices. But he acknowledges the possible political

obstacles and offers other options, some of which have been proposed by John Edwards, Obama and even Hillary.

But Krugman’s foundational argument is that we must discredit the neocons’ insistence that government regulation is bad and that the state’s intervention to moderate the excesses of capitalism is unnecessary. He shrewdly notes how movement conservatives have for 40 years twinned this mantra with race-baiting policies and rhetoric that portrays poor people of color—not the rich white fat cats—as the problem.

Krugman maintains that a majority of Americans are ready to revive the demand that it is government’s responsibility to protect its citizens and to prevent the consolidation of a plutocracy. Economic inequality has further corrupted our politics, but Krugman ends his book on a positive note: Movement conservatism has become “intellectually decrepit” while progressive politics gathers real steam.

For years, Republicans tarred Democrats as “tax and spend liberals.” Just as gays and lesbians reclaimed the word “queer” as a move of empowerment, Democrats should embrace the “tax and spend” moniker. Taxing and spending is what advanced, industrialized countries do. And they do it to promote equitable societies.

Yes, tax the rich and big corporations and spend it on the rest of America: Let’s spend it on healthcare for all, on decent schools for our kids, on environmental protections, on a consumer products safety commission, on universal pre-school, on a cure for AIDS and, most of all, let’s tax and spend to develop paths to peace. ■

**Taxing and spending is what advanced, industrialized countries do. And they do it to promote equitable societies.**



BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

# Harold Washington Remembered



**W**HEN HAROLD WASHINGTON, Chicago's first black mayor, died on Nov. 25, 1987, many of us understood that his death marked the passing of a great man. But while we lamented the negative impact of his loss, few of us had any inkling of the vast political vacuum he would leave behind.

As time passes, the vacuum expands.

Back then, it seemed likely that Washington's powerful presence could propel the formation of progressive alliances across the country. However, as we grope around in the political darkness he once illuminated, it seems clear that his unique personality was a major reason for his success.

Washington was a rare composite. Washington was a peoples' intellectual and a seasoned political operator. He was an effective legislator, a progressive activist and a community leader with deep connections to grassroots organizations. (He was also a longtime supporter of this magazine.) His political success was never duplicated and the movement he inspired quickly dissipated following his death.

Washington's initial election occurred in 1983, when progressive forces were mired in the gloom of the Reagan administration. He found mayoral success using a formula that was part campaign and part crusade. But Washington was no political neophyte, full of naïve idealism. He had already served many years as a state legislator and a member of Congress, and was well versed in the nuts and bolts of pragmatic politics.

His candidacy forged political unity among Chicago's notoriously fractious black community and helped bring the city's feuding Latino groups (including Mexicans and Puerto Ricans) together. He ignited a bonfire of political support among the city's traditionally laidback Asian electorate. White progressives and reformers were attracted to his manifest independence from the Chicago machine and his promises of governmental transparency.

The forces of reform put into motion by his 1983 election and 1987 re-election inspired hope that a progressive prairie fire would spread across the nation. But no such luck.

However, the Washington phenomena did provide hope that black-led, multiracial coalitions were politically viable.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson explicitly used Washington's hybrid campaign/crusade as a template for his presiden-

tial runs in 1984 and 1988, during which time he amassed respectable vote totals, especially in 1988. But Jackson's Rainbow Coalition campaigns were the last hurrah and interest in such efforts later dwindled.

That's why many veterans of the Washington years were riveted by the political emergence of Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.). His trans-racial appeal and his progressive politics seemed to echo Washington's, and they triggered hopes for a revival of the progressive coalitions he inspired.

Obama initially seemed willing to utilize the Washington hybrid in his run for the presidency, but he since has adopted a more conventional campaign model. Illinois' junior senator may embody aspects of Washington's appeal, but he is not exploiting it.

Although a haze of nostalgia may cloud our recall of the

**Although a haze of nostalgia clouds our recall of the Harold Washington years, few can disagree that the era was a time of hopeful activism.**

Harold Washington years, few can disagree that that era was a time of hopeful activism. His mayoral tenure was a time of governmental transparency, political fairness and even racial reconciliation. The Washington years were a time when progres-

sive coalitions of multiracial and multiethnic Chicagoans were celebrating their successes and mobilizing for more.

Of course, there also was a backlash of an anxious white electorate and zealous opposition. Many in that camp opposed Washington for racist reasons and others were ideological opponents of his progressive assaults on the encrusted Chicago machine. Those epic conflicts earned Chicago the moniker, "Beirut on the Lake," drawing comparisons to the brutal civil war then raging in Lebanon's capital city. The rancor cooled following a special election that gave Washington a more balanced city council, and the mayor went to work engineering the fairest administration the city had ever seen.

It may be comforting to dream of those days and gloat about the triumphs and the promise of that era. But the Washington years happened because people were not dreaming or awash in nostalgia—they were awake and active.

Commemorations of the 20th anniversary of his death should act as a wake-up call to those of us who may have forgotten the promise ignited by this amazing intellectual of the people who became a political champion. ■

**SALIM MUWAKKIL'S** new book is *Harold! Photographs from the Harold Washington Years* (Northwestern University Press, 2007). For more information, visit [www.haroldbook.org](http://www.haroldbook.org).

BY H. CANDACE GORMAN

## Third Time's the Charm?



**M**OST COURTS IN the civilized world will not admit evidence obtained under torture. That's why our government had to set up a new system to avoid these "technicalities." Under the Military Commissions Act (MCA), which Congress passed in September 2006, the Bush administration can avoid having to present real evidence in hearings for Guantánamo detainees.

But what seemed like an easy loophole has yielded problems for the administration—like everything else that the war criminals running our country have concocted on the fly.

The MCA allowed the government to rely on the Combatant Status Review Tribunals (CRSTs), the initial non-public hearings that helped declare detainees being held in Guantánamo as "enemy combatants." After the Supreme Court ruled in June 2004 that detainees have the right to legal counsel and that the government is required to provide a procedure to assess the appropriateness of continued detention, the Pentagon scrambled to conduct these CSRTs.

From September until December 2004, the government held more than 550 of these kangaroo tribunals. In June, two military attorneys who were involved in the tribunal process recently came forward to expose them for the frauds that they were. Lt. Col Stephen Abraham put it this way: "What were purported to be specific statements of fact lacked even the most fundamental earmarks of objectively credible evidence."

The MCA also retroactively repealed the ancient writ of habeas corpus, which allows prisoners to come before a court and ask why they are being held. Instead, the MCA allows prisoners to file a petition with the D.C. appellate court. But such legal challenges are severely limited.

Several hundred of these petitions—including one from my client Abdul Hamid al-Ghizzawi—are now clogged in the appellate court system.

However, in a surprising ruling, the otherwise compliant D.C. appellate court ordered the government to provide materials from the 2004 CSRT reviews to demonstrate what it knew about the detainees at the time they were found to be "enemy combatants."

This sent the government into a tizzy. The reason? The government knew (and we didn't) that the military had not bothered to retain most of those documents. So now

the government has no documents showing any valid reason for holding these men.

After stalling, in September the administration finally admitted that it hadn't kept those materials. (It seems the White House didn't foresee that their friends on the appellate court would require them to produce anything—like evidence—to justify holding these men.)

In October, however, the D.C. appellate court jumped in once again to save the administration from its own incompetence. The court suggested that the government just start over, "taking care this time to retain all the government information." There you have it: Three years after the government held hearings to determine whether the men at Guantánamo were "enemy combatants" or "non-enemy combatants," the government is preparing to do it all over

again—because it didn't keep the paperwork the first time.

For my client al-Ghizzawi, that will mean a third tribunal. The first was in 2004, and it found him to be an enemy combatant. A second tribunal, which was hurriedly put to-

gether a few weeks later with a new, more submissive panel (but with the identical garbage evidence), also found him to be an enemy combatant.

When I heard that the government was contemplating doing all of these tribunals again, I sent a letter to the government attorney whose duty apparently is to obfuscate every legal issue in the Guantánamo cases. I asked him if the government intended to do another Combatant Status Review Tribunal for al-Ghizzawi and, if so, could I please also be notified so that I could send documents that will show his innocence?

What's more, I asked whether the military has decided whether attorneys can be present at the new tribunals, and I asked to be present at al-Ghizzawi's third tribunal, if such an event is to take place.

I waited more than a week for a response. Then I sent an email asking those questions again. This time I received a reply: "We are in receipt of your letter and email. We are not in a position to provide any information at this time."

I immediately responded, asking if he could tell me when he might anticipate being able to provide that information to me. I don't expect a response.

Perhaps one day I will learn that the military conducted a third tribunal for al-Ghizzawi. He will probably be too ill to attend or at least too ill to participate.

I don't expect the government will extend me an invitation. ■

**The White House didn't foresee that the appellate court would require them to produce evidence to justify holding these men.**

BY LAURA S. WASHINGTON

# Come On People! Bill Cosby Is Right



**A**S A CONTROVERSY, Bill Cosby's *Come on People: On the Path from Victims to Victors* is hardly controversial. The new book, co-authored with Harvard psychiatrist Alvin F. Pousaint, is an old-fashioned, conservative cultural critique that offers an eat-your-vegetables, teach-your-children, pull-your-pants-up polemic.

In 2004, Cosby roiled the racial waters when he blasted the pathology of black failure at an NAACP dinner in Washington, D.C. The iconic comedian, known as the jolly JELL-O man and playful patriarch of *The Cosby Show*'s Huxtables, stunned the nation with a bitter diatribe against low-income African-American families.

He hung our dirty laundry out to dry.

Three years later, his words still sting: "The lower economic people are not holding up their end in this deal. These people are not parenting," he ranted at the stone-faced crowd of America's black elite. "They are buying things for their kids—\$500 sneakers for what? And won't spend \$200 for *Hooked on Phonics*!"

"I can't even talk the way these people talk. 'Why you ain't?' 'Where you is?' ... Everybody knows it's important to speak English except these knuckleheads. You can't be a doctor with that kind of crap coming out of your mouth."

Back then, Cosby didn't get a lot of "Amen, brothers!" from that crowd, nor from many others back in the 'hood. At least, not out in the open.

Cosby's critics excoriated him for delivering his rant from an elitist ivory tower without offering solutions. They argue that the black poor are the helpless victims of white supremacy and institutional racism. In other words, it's not their fault—the deck is stacked just too high.

But he was right then. And he is right now.

*Come on People* has replaced Cosby's vitriolic speechifying with firm but loving essays that urge blacks to eschew their pathological embrace of victimization, violence and despair.

The authors respond to their detractors. "Certain people tell us that we are picking on the poor. Many of those who accuse us are scholars and intellectuals, upset that we are not blaming everything on white people as they do. Well, blaming only the system keeps certain black people in the limelight, but it also keeps the black

poor wallowing in victimhood."

The mere act of putting our shortcomings on paper is revolutionary. Black folks ferociously cling to the age-old code of honor that pledges to keep the "race secrets"—for fear of having our own deeds turned against us. "Don't tell 'whitey,'" we whisper.

Few can object to the book's core propositions: Cherish your children. Get an education. Speak standard English. Listen to the elders. Banish gun violence. No more excuses.

It's a no-brainer.

As the scholars and intellectuals drone on from college campuses to legislatures to C-Span, their so-called "victims" are never in the room. The elites don't ask the folks who are toiling, suffering and, yes, striving. Cosby, on the other hand, has been asking.

*Come On People* is packed with anecdotes gleaned from "Call Outs with Bill Cosby," a series of public gatherings in cities and towns across the nation. Cosby's town hall meetings convened blacks in cities

from Compton, Calif., to Kansas City, Mo., to Washington, D.C., to respond to his call and come up with solutions.

One of the most enduring of African-American taboos is that we don't acknowledge the out-of-the-box rates of infant mortality and teenage pregnancy in black communities.

The book quotes Xylina Bean, chief of neonatology at the King Drew Center in Compton, calling young women out on what she calls "incidental babies."

"We all know you've got to do something in order to have one, OK?" she tells the crowd. "So it's not accidental. It's not incidental. And one of the things that I am really tired of is all of these incidental babies. They just 'incidentally' happen."

Priority number one should be protecting the child, she says. "You get to decide who gets to be your baby's daddy."

It's a conversation we should have had a long time ago. Come on, ladies. While African Americans have long treasured their children, we have grown far too casual, even cavalier, about making babies. We have heard all the excuses. I forgot to take my pill. I don't want to marry the guy, anyway; I just want a baby. I don't believe in abortion. I have low self-esteem.

Thanks to Bill Cosby, more of us are saying the excuses just don't cut it anymore.

You know that old saying about what the truth can do? Come on, people—set yourselves free. ■

**In 2004, Cosby didn't get a lot of 'Amen, brothers!' from the black elite, nor from many others back in the 'hood. At least, not openly.**



# China's Valley of Tears

Is authoritarian capitalism the future?

BY SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

**T**HE EXPLOSION OF CAPITALISM in China has many Westerners asking when political democracy—as the “natural” accompaniment of capitalism—will emerge. But a closer look quickly dispels any such hope.

Modern-day China is not an oriental-despotic distortion of capitalism, but rather the repetition of capitalism's development in Europe itself. In the early modern era, most European states were far from democratic. And if they were democratic (as was the case of the Netherlands during the 17th century), it was only a democracy of the propertied liberal elite, not of the workers. Conditions for capitalism were created and sustained by a brutal state dictatorship, very much like today's China. The state legalized violent expropriations of the common people, which turned them proletarian. The state then disciplined them, teaching them to conform to their new ancillary role.

The features we identify today with liberal democracy and freedom (trade unions, universal vote, freedom of the press, etc.) are far from natural fruits of capitalism. The lower classes won them by waging long, difficult struggles throughout the 19th century. Recall the list of demands that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels made in the conclusion of *The Communist Manifesto*. With the exception of the abolition of private property, most of them—such as a progressive income tax, free public education and abolishing child labor—are today widely accepted in “bourgeois” democracies, and all were gained as the result of popular struggles.

So there is nothing exotic in today's China: It is merely repeating our own forgotten past. But what about the afterthought of some Western liberal critics who ask how much faster China's development would have been had the country grown within the context of a political



Beijing citizens ride bikes near the new CCP-controlled China Television Center.

CHINA PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

democracy? The German-British philosopher Ralf Dahrendorf has linked the increasing distrust in democracy to the fact that, after every revolutionary change, the road to new prosperity leads through a “valley of tears.” In other words, after the breakdown of state socialism, a country cannot immediately become a successful market economy. The limited—but

real—socialist welfare and security have to be dismantled, and these first steps are necessary and painful. For Dahrendorf, this passage through the “valley of tears” lasts longer than the average period between democratic elections. As a result, the temptation is great for leaders of a democratic country to postpone difficult changes for short-term electoral gains.

In Western Europe, the move from welfare state to the new global economy has involved painful renunciations, less security and less guaranteed social care. In post-Communist nations, the economic results of this new democratic order have disappointed a large strata of the population, who, in the glorious days of 1989, equated democracy with the abundance of the Western consumerist societies. And now, 20 years later, when the abundance is still missing, they blame democracy itself.

Dahrendorf, however, fails to note the opposite temptation: The belief that, if the majority of a population resists structural changes in the economy, an enlightened elite should take power, even by non-democratic means, to lay the foundations for a truly stable democracy. Along these lines, *Newsweek* columnist Fareed Zakaria points out how democracy can only “catch on” in economically developed countries. He says that if developing countries are “prematurely democratized,” then economic catastrophe and political despotism will soon follow. It’s no wonder, then, that today’s most economically successful developing countries (Taiwan, South Korea, Chile) have embraced full democracy only after a period of authoritarian rule.

Isn’t this line of reasoning the best argument for the Chinese way to capitalism as opposed to the Russian way? In Russia, after the collapse of Communism, the government adopted “shock therapy” and threw itself directly into democracy and the fast track to capitalism—with economic bankruptcy as the result. (There are good reasons to be modestly paranoid here: Were the Western economic advisers to President Boris Yeltsin who proposed this approach really as innocent as they appeared? Or were they serving U.S. strategic interests by weakening Russia economically?)

China, on the other hand, has followed the path of Chile and South Korea in its passage to capitalism, using unencumbered authoritarian state power to control the social costs and thus avoid chaos. The weird combination of capitalism and Communist rule proved to be a blessing (not even) in disguise for China.

The country has developed fast, not in spite of authoritarian rule, but because of it. With Stalinist-sounding paranoia, we are left to wonder, “Maybe those who worry about China’s lack of

democracy are actually worried that its fast development could make it the next global superpower, thereby threatening Western primacy.”

**T**ODAY, THE TRAGEDY of the Great Leap Forward is repeating itself as a comedy. It has become the rapid capitalist Great Leap Forward into modernization, with the old slogan “iron

mate triumph of capitalism, the sign of its full *institutionalization*. For example, China has taken recent legal measures to guarantee private property, a move that the West has hailed as a crucial step toward legal stability.

But what kind of Marxism is as appropriate for today’s China? First, let’s look at the difference between Marxism and Leftism. Leftism is a term that refers to

## **The list of demands made in *The Communist Manifesto* are today widely accepted in ‘bourgeois’ democracies, and all were gained as the result of popular struggles.**

foundry into every village” re-emerging as “a skyscraper into every street.” The supreme irony of history is that Mao Zedong himself created the ideological conditions for rapid capitalist development. What was his call to the people, especially the young ones, in the Cultural Revolution? Don’t wait for someone else to tell you what to do, you have the right to rebel! So think and act for yourselves, destroy cultural relics, denounce and attack not only your elders, but also government and party officials! Swipe away the repressive state mechanisms and organize yourself in communes!

And Mao’s call was heard. What followed was such an explosion of unrestrained passion to delegitimize all forms of authority that, at the end, Mao had to call in the army to restore order. The paradox is that the key battle during the Cultural Revolution was not between the Communist Party apparatus and the denounced traditionalist enemies, but between the Communist Party and the forces that Mao himself called into being.

A similar dynamic is discernible in today’s China. The Party resuscitates big ideological traditions in order to contain the disintegrative consequences of the capitalist explosion that the Party itself created. It is with this in mind that one should read the recent campaign in China to revive Marxism as an efficient state ideology. (Literally hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars are spent on this venture.)

Those who see this as a threat to capitalist liberalization totally miss the point. Strange as it may sound, this return of Marxism is the sign of the ulti-

any talk of workers’ liberation—from free trade unions to overcoming capitalism. But the Marxist thesis says that developing the forces of production is the key to social progress, and it is this type of Marxist development that fosters the conditions for the continuing fast “modernization.”

In today’s China, only the Communist Party’s leading role can sustain rapid modernization. The official (Confucian) term is that China should become a “harmonious society.”

To put it in old Maoist terms, the main enemy may appear to be the “bourgeois” threat. But, in the eyes of the ruling elite, the main enemies are instead the “principal contradiction” between unfettered capitalist development that the Communist Party rulers profit from and the threat of revolt by the workers and peasants.

Last year, the Chinese government strengthened some of its oppressive apparatuses—including forming special units of riot police to crush popular unrest. These police are the actual social expression of what, in ideology, appears as a revival of Marxism. In 1905, Trotsky characterized tsarist Russia as “the vicious combination of the Asian knout [whip] and the European stock market.” Doesn’t this characterization still hold for modern-day China?

But what if the promised democratic second act that follows the authoritarian valley of tears never arrives? That is what is so unsettling about today’s China: Its authoritarian capitalism may not be merely a remainder of our past but a portent of our future. ■

# iPower to the People

The perils and promise of point-and-click politics

BY JESSICA CLARK



**G**RINNING LIKE A ROCK star, Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards strides out to a lighted platform in the center of a townhall gathering at the University of New Hampshire. With his glossy 'do flanked by the neon red-and-blue lightening bolts of the "Choose or Lose" logo affixed to the wall, Edwards nods and pauses to make deliberate eye contact with students in the audience. It's a made-for-MTV moment.

The first in a series of MySpace/MTV "presidential dialogues," the feel and format of this late-September forum stands in stark contrast to the previous night's party-sanctioned Democratic debate at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. At that one, moderator Tim Russert controlled the debate with a firm hand. But pandering to the youth vote is nothing new—what sets this event apart is the way viewers interact with candidates.

Like other rejiggered debates in this campaign cycle, the ongoing MySpace/MTV presidential dialogues are the product of two forces reshaping voters' engagement with candidates. The first is a growing disgust with the mainstream press, expressed most strikingly by the surging popularity of citizen-generated media. The second is a public call for greater political access in

the face of an imperial presidency and a weak Congress. The hope is that participatory politics will counteract voter apathy that results from top-down politics.

If we're to believe the hype, this is a banner moment for unmediated political action.

"Tired of scripted old-style presidential debates?" boasts the presidential dialogue webpage ([www.myspace.com/election2008](http://www.myspace.com/election2008)). "MySpace and MTV join forces to empower you to ask questions directly to top presidential candidates and respond to their answers in real time." This rhetoric of self-determination can get bossy: "Declare Yourself!" screams a blinking graphic. "Ask Questions!" advises a widget that allows users to launch MySpace's instant messaging (IM) software. "Spread the Word!" urges a tool that lets users link to the forum from their profile pages.

And, most importantly: "Vote." In the lingua franca of today's participatory politics, clicking on a button translates into democracy.

MTV correspondents Gideon Yago and SuChin Pak work the crowd. Yago announces that there will be "no delays, no censors, no tasers." *Washington Post* reporter Chris Cilizza fields IM questions and weighs in on live polling data. He seems put out being the mouthpiece

for chatroom personae like "LunarGoddess68," who has a question about Edwards' education plan. Edwards answers even the most esoteric of student questions directly, and gamely responds to Cilizza's awkward interjections about real-time viewer response pie charts.

Viewers rate candidate responses with either "like it" (clicking buttons that indicate the candidate answered questions, understands reality or has good ideas) or "don't like it" (buttons that indicate the candidate dodged questions, is out of touch, has wrong ideas). As these things go, Edwards' appearance is a success. By the end, 94 percent of online respondents have given him "like it" ratings. Yet, MTV says, of the 2,300 people who submitted questions online, only three make it into the discussion.

From the point of view of candidates, this format is useful. Why pay for focus groups when you can crowdsource feedback for free? MySpace wins big too, gaining a seat at the table as an arbiter of presidential power. And MTV accrues gravitas to balance its other MySpace-inspired production: "A Shot at Love with Tila Tequila" (which promises viewers "hair pulling ... ball-busting and, er, even some butt waxing").

But what about voters? Are we feeling empowered yet?



## Democracy in the Internet age, baby

For decades, broadcast outlets have been both voters' main conduit to the candidates and the major financial beneficiaries of political campaigns. By the time the 2008 election rolls around, politicians and their allies will have spent \$3 billion on advertising in traditional broadcast media, according to an April report from Wachovia Capital Markets.

But with user-driven digital platforms now quick at the heels of broadcasters, legacy journalism outlets are partnering with

Led by high school physics teacher David Colarusso, the site invited users to rank the questions. Several candidates answered the top-ranking ones, and users are already voting on videos submitted for the Nov. 28 CNN/YouTube Republican debate.

As James Koteki (YouTube name: EmergencyCheese) notes in the launch video for the Community Counts site, "It's democracy in the Internet age, baby."

### Not your mother's media

Media and campaign professionals are right to be nervous about these new for-

dia baron Rupert Murdoch), YouTube and Blogger (both owned by Google), and other similar platforms, are large commercial websites that harness citizen-driven media to draw ad share and position themselves in a hot investment market. While everyday people may be producing political media out of their own passion and sense of civic urgency, corporate sites are cashing in on their labor. And the ever-more-precise tailoring of Web content to consumer interests is raising privacy concerns.

Corporations such as Microsoft, Yahoo!, Time Warner and Google were among

## The CNN/YouTube format is more entertaining than the standard, straitlaced snoozefest—a boon if the goal is basic voter engagement.

search engines, video-sharing sites and social networks in an attempt to remain relevant while still retaining the driver's seat.

July's CNN/YouTube presidential debate ([www.youtube.com/debates](http://www.youtube.com/debates)) offered a hybrid of new media and old gatekeepers. YouTube users submitted nearly 3,000 video questions for Democratic candidates—including one from a climate-change obsessed snowman. Moderated by journalist Anderson Cooper, the debate featured 39 of them.

Critics like Matthew Yglesias, a blogger and associate editor at *The Atlantic Monthly*, complained that mainstream outlets are violating the open spirit of online communication. "Instead of delivering some sort of Politics 2.0," Yglesias wrote in the July 25 *Guardian*, "the [CNN/YouTube] debate only provided a further level of mediation between citizen and politician. The professional journalists portrayed themselves as liberated from any need to serve higher analytic functions ... The questions themselves, meanwhile, tended to differ from the norm only by being more absurd and featuring performances of folksiness."

But the debate's broadcast was only part of the story. The submission of thousands of videos signaled the rising expectation that politicians can—and should—answer voters' questions.

After the broadcast, Community Counts, a site made up of volunteers who met on YouTube ([www.communitycounts.us](http://www.communitycounts.us)), launched a campaign to pressure candidates to respond to unanswered videos.

Bloggers, podcasters and vloggers have served as reporters and commentators for several years, and now they are edging up as debate moderators. In mid-September, Yahoo! co-organized a "Democratic Candidate Mashup" with The Huffington Post and Slate ([debates.news.yahoo.com](http://debates.news.yahoo.com)). The mashup gave users a seat in the producer's chair, letting them choose from pre-recorded questions that journalist Charlie Rose and talk-show host Bill Maher posed to candidates.

The remixed debates are proving popular. While the selection of questions may limit the range of political discussion, the CNN/YouTube format is more entertaining than the standard, straitlaced snoozefest—a boon if the goal is basic voter engagement. According to Nielsen Media Research, the two-hour July broadcast delivered a higher viewership among adults between the ages of 18 and 34 than any other debate in cable history. And the on-air broadcast of the Edwards MySpace/MTV presidential dialogue was the number-one program for cable viewers aged 18-24 for that time slot.

But while these experiments open the floor for new voices and new questions, it's not as though citizen journalists have suddenly gained a mass audience, or that voters have traded broadcast consumption for face-to-face access to candidates. Instead, a fresh set of corporate power-brokers is now mediating the relationship between audience and politician.

MySpace (owned by conservative me-

those spending more than \$33 billion in "an ad industry-focused merger and acquisition spree," writes Jeff Chester of the Center for Digital Democracy in a recent article in *The Nation*. They've dropped "big bucks to acquire firms that collect, analyze and target us largely via stealth and highly sophisticated interactive ad technologies."

This Web 2.0 bubble is still far from bursting. More than half of all Americans between the ages of 12 and 17 use some online social networking site such as MySpace or Facebook, according to a survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project. In late October, Microsoft announced that it would pay MySpace rival Facebook \$240 million for a mere 1.6 percent stake in the site. This may not be your mother's media, but it's still big business.

Some foundations are getting into the digital mix, underwriting both for-profit and nonprofit media experiments that offer more open-content models. Leading the charge is the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, which, in 2006, awarded MTV \$700,000 for its plan to place a young reporter in every state to create weekly cell-phone videos on the election and other political issues.

Knight also partnered with MTV (and its corporate owner Viacom) on a "Young Creators" award ([www.youngcreatorsaward.com](http://www.youngcreatorsaward.com)), which will give up to \$500,000 to innovators under 25 who have a winning proposal for a digital news project that helps to build community. The contest closed in mid-October.

"The idea that MTV should be subsidized for contributing to public service is wrongheaded," Chester wrote on his blog at the Center for Digital Democracy. "Journalism foundations such as Knight and [journalism schools] should be holding the media industry's editorial feet to the fire, shaming them to spend more money on serious journalism." But what that serious journalism might look like in this environment is still unclear.

## Disintermediated Democrats

User-driven online platforms are not only reshaping the media landscape but shaking up the way candidates communicate with voters. Digital tools played a signal role in the 2004 election, and tools have now permeated other facets of election planning, from communications to fundraising to field operations.

Less than a year out from the election, the presidential campaigns are in R&D mode, experimenting with digital engagement tools while still trying to maintain obligations to older forms of political communication. This tension is reflected in the proliferation of debate formats.

On the Democratic side, the September Dartmouth debate was one of six approved by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) through the end of 2007. As tradition would have it, the party organized all six in conjunction with at least one mainstream news network.

For their part, advocacy groups have been partnering with niche cable channels to host debates that hone in on particular issues. Since April, the Democratic candidates have tangled at two historically black colleges and the NAACP convention, at the YearlyKos and AFL-CIO gatherings in Chicago, on LGBT channel LOGO and Spanish-language channel Univision, and on PBS in conjunction with AARP.

But the proliferation of debates has robbed these proceedings of some of their thunder. In a more closed mainstream echo chamber, for example, the debate on gay and lesbian issues would have likely generated an uproar that resonated through the rest of the election. However, in our multichannel, multiplatform world, such narrowcast debates no longer carry the same emblematic heft.

While special-interest organizations still stand as a proxy between citizens and candidates, online participatory campaigning promises to reduce the degree of separation and artifice to nearly nil. In the business world, this is known as "disintermediation"—or cutting out the middleman. Its star pupil is Amazon.com, which has disintermediated many an independent bookstore out of existence.

Advocates of participatory politics bemoan the fact that civil rights, environmental and consumer protection organizations that once depended on the support and convictions of their members have

ossified into Beltway-bound fundraising machines, more interested in obtaining direct mail lists than in working together to advance movements for change.

"Political power is more and more situated in far-flung networks that can be activated and deactivated quickly," writes blogger and online organizer Matt Stoller at OpenLeft.com. "And the new millennial generation that will be the political backbone for the new progressive America likes it this way."

Techpresident.com—a group blog managed by the Personal Democracy Forum, a site that explores the ways that technology is changing politics—tracks the use of online social networking tools by the campaigns. The Obama campaign, especially, has aggressively pursued voters via online tools. As of Sept. 28, it was leading all other Democratic candidates. (See chart.)

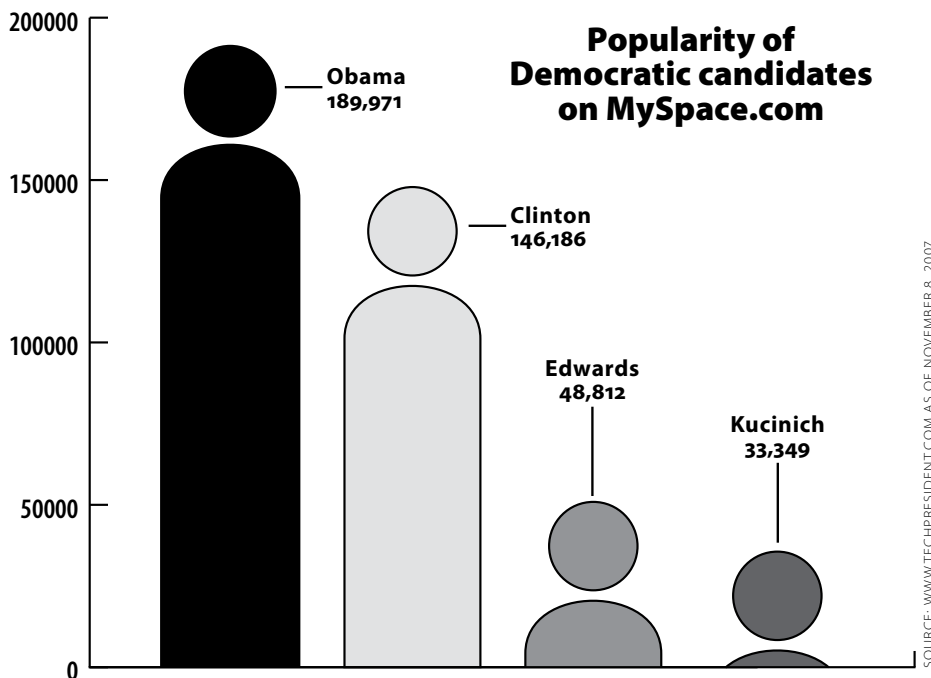
In addition to Obama's sizeable MySpace and Facebook presence, his campaign has developed its own active social network, MyBarackObama.com. And by mid-October, the campaign had attracted more than 180,000 friends on the niche social network site BlackPlanet.com.

By recruiting "friends" on both broad and targeted social networks, and then offering campaign-focused tools on its own site, the Obama campaign is providing online channels for individual voters to become more involved. Social networks also allow users to bond with one another, creating a different kind of connection to the campaign. Forging such personal ties can be as—if not more—important to voters than appealing to them on policy positions. As psychologist Drew Westen writes in *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*, "In politics, when reason and emotion collide, emotion invariably wins."

Of course, the role of these technologies in politics is still evolving, and entertainment still trumps politics online. To the chagrin of the other candidates, comedian Stephen Colbert's late bid for the presidency led a Facebook group called "1,000,000 Strong for Stephen T. Colbert" to gather more than 1 million members in just over a week, overstressing the site's servers and becoming its most popular political destination.

## Building a better debate

For political observers like Micah Sifry, co-founder of Personal Democracy Forum (PDF) and editor of Techpresident.



com, the more online access that voters have to candidates and to one another, the better. A long-time political writer and expert on third-party politics, Sifry first sensed a shift in the dynamics of voter engagement during the 2004 race, when his brother David Sifry, founder of blog search engine Technorati, dragged him to a conference of open source

cluding YouTube, MySpace, Yahoo Video and Blip.tv—and tag them as “10Questions” to be included for consideration. Audience members for the site will then vote on the 10 best questions and candidates will be invited to post video answers through the end of the year.

Compared to the hyperbole of the MySpace presidential dialogue page, the

questions posted to 10Questions, only two videos were from participants who aren't white. This reflects no prejudice on the part of the site's organizers, but rather a structural gap in the demographics of online politics. The assumptions of the site—that presidential politics are relevant to the lives of ordinary citizens, that candidates will answer the ques-

## **'The progressive side is playing its game in a very old way. Middle-class progressives are very unaware of how elite their styles are,' says Micah Sifry of Personal Democracy Forum.**

programmers, social software developers and science fiction writers. There he found kindred spirits.

“It felt like a gathering of the tribes,” says Sifry. Even though the Dean campaign had just collapsed, there was “a lot of excitement about how technology was going to change the structure of politics.”

Sifry noticed that conference participants were using chat tools to communicate about the conference live. Known as a “backchannel,” such conversations can quickly evolve into online content, broadening access to events. After that experience, Sifry found traditional political conferences as out of step. “The progressive side is playing its game in a very old way,” he says. “Middle-class progressives are very unaware of how elite their styles are.” This insight led him to work with entrepreneur and technology consultant Andrew Rasiej to co-found PDF.

Even online, candidates are engaging in a style of “campaign management that is still top-down and cautious,” Sifry says. The key to analyzing experiments like the MySpace debate is “judging whether or not there's some change in the normal conversation with a candidate. People can e-mail in questions; so what? People have been able to use 800 numbers for years. The question [is] how it changes the dialogue.”

PDF is taking a shot at changing the dialogue with its own presidential forum, 10Questions ([www.10Questions.com](http://www.10Questions.com)). The group worked with Colarusso from Community Counts to build on his video voting site. Although the *New York Times* editorial board and MSNBC.com will present top-ranked questions to candidates, the questions won't be filtered through a journalist. Instead, users can post questions on a variety of video sharing platforms—in-

cluding YouTube, MySpace, Yahoo Video and Blip.tv—and tag them as “10Questions” to be included for consideration. Audience members for the site will then vote on the 10 best questions and candidates will be invited to post video answers through the end of the year.

Third party candidates are welcome to submit their answers, too, as long as their party “has achieved or is likely to achieve a line on the ballot in enough states to hypothetically win an electoral-college majority.” The site does not accept advertising, and sponsorship is free. Sponsors range from conservative pundit Michelle Malkin to the Capitol Hill tabloid *Politico* to lefty radio station Air America.

Rasiej, who is funding 10Questions out of his own pocket, says “the political system is going through massive changes.” He notes the Internet now serves as the “ringmaster” for election coverage, unlike in previous elections when professional journalists primarily covered politics. And he suggests that reporters set context and point audiences to quality sources of online information instead of serving as gatekeepers. “The power is in the hands of the voter,” he says.

But participatory online politics are a partial solution for engaging a broad swath of the electorate. While the barriers to entry for citizens who want to create media or become involved in campaigns have dropped dramatically in the last few years, such activities still require time, equipment and online access—not to mention inclination. Getting people interested in elections is an uphill battle, especially if they feel alienated by politics-as-usual. The bulk of do-it-yourself digital media has little to do with political issues and even less to do with presidential campaigns.

For example, as of Oct. 26, of the 83

tions posed to them and that they'll tell the truth when they do—may hold little appeal to voters who have too often been marginalized in elections.

Social justice activists have found their own online tools for mobilizing constituencies and applying pressure to politicians from outside the system. In mid-September, more than 10,000 people traveled to Jena, La., to protest the racially biased sentencing of six black students. Online organizing—across platforms such as ColorOfChange.org, the African-American blogosphere, YouTube and Wikipedia—was central to mobilizing this groundswell. “The big-name civil rights figures had to scramble to catch up with Jena,” writes Matt Compton in the online journal *The Democratic Strategist*. “[T]he organizing came together from the bottom up.” The model resonates far beyond the point-and-click polling of online democracy.

While opening political discussion through digital tools is worthwhile, virtual democracy needs broader reforms to address basic inequities in the political system. Many barriers remain: from laws passed in more than a half-dozen states (including Florida and Ohio) that discourage groups like the League of Women Voters and ACORN from running voter registration drives, to lingering questions about vote fraud involving electronic ballot machines, to the disproportionate influence that the electoral college system grants to voters in “swing states.” If as much was being invested in opening up our voting system as is in opening up our media system, real change could happen.

It's one thing to engage voters. It's another to enfranchise them. When both happen, we can start talking about empowerment. ■





# Hounding the Bush Dogs

Meet the candidates who are taking on conservative Democrats

BY ADAM DOSTER

**M**ARK PERA IS NOT one to back down from a challenge. The son of a steelworker, Pera toiled in Northwest Indiana's mills to put himself through college and law school. As a Cook County assistant state's attorney, he worked on environmental criminal prosecution and public utility regulation, diligently fighting special interests. Now the broad-shouldered, 52-year-old father of four is setting his sights on the 2008 Democratic primary in Illinois' 3rd congressional district, which encompasses southwest Chicago and nearby suburbs. By the looks of it, he's not messing around. Five full-timers staff his campaign headquarters, a two-story brick house outfitted with stickers and schedules. In August, Pera took a leave of absence from his job to run full time. He also took out a home equity loan to finance portions of the campaign. His favorite phrase? "We're committed to winning this race."

But Democratic incumbent Dan Lip-

inski stands in his way. Lipinski took control of the seat after his father Bill, the district's representative for 22 years, retired abruptly in 2004 after winning the party's primary. With no candidate to fill his seat in the general election, the elder Lipinski suggested his son take a stab at politics. State party leaders acquiesced, giving the younger Lipinski the nomination—and subsequent victory—without a primary campaign.

Since slipping into office, the younger Lipinski has frustrated progressive constituents with a less-than-liberal voting record. He is opposed to stem cell research and a woman's right to choose, earning him a zero-percent score from Planned Parenthood and NARAL. His ACLU rating is one of the lowest for any Democrat outside of the South, partly because of his support for the Protect America Act, an update to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that the ACLU says "allows for massive, untargeted collection of international communications without court order or meaningful oversight by either

Congress or the courts." Lipinski has not done much to end the war in Iraq either, voting with 85 other Democrats to pass an emergency supplemental appropriations bill that lacked a withdrawal deadline.

Lipinski's backers contend that his voting record aligns with his district's socially conservative residents. But evidence suggests the district is no longer the Reagan-Democrat hotbed of his father's time. John Kerry won 59 percent of the vote in 2004, and an influx of Latinos, who now make up 20 percent of the district's population, has further solidified the seat as a Democratic stronghold. "It's a lot more progressive than people realize," says Larry Handlin, who has been blogging about Illinois politics at ArchPundit since 2002.

The Pera-Lipinski race could serve as a prototype for a forgotten—yet vital—strategy available to progressive activists: the primary challenge. While the Christian Right, the Club for Growth and other right-wingers have shifted the GOP to the right by running candidates against

moderate Republicans for decades, the left hasn't built the kind of party-within-party apparatus necessary in two-party politics.

## Let's get ready to rumble

Why don't the donkeys grapple with each other? Some partisans are afraid that challenging incumbents could risk forfeiting seats to Republicans, especially in conservative-leaning locales. And incumbents, in an effort to retain their jobs, characterize primary opponents as unworthy of media and donor attention, when in reality they are citizens participating in a standard democratic process. Even the reliably progressive Rep. Neil Abercrombie (D-Hawaii) told *Congressional Quarterly* this fall that primary pressure from the left amounted to a "recapitulation of the Inquisition."

From the challenger's standpoint, taking on an incumbent requires considerable chutzpah. Often without institutional backing and little name recognition, these candidates are likely to encounter heartache, not triumph.

"The hardest thing to do in this political system is to run for office," says Matt Stoller, a D.C.-based political activist and consultant who blogs at the new strategy website OpenLeft. "It's lonely ... you have no income, very little sleep, a terrible diet and little family time."

Given the difficulty of mounting primary challenges, combined with gerrymandered districts and the plentiful resources incumbents have at their disposal—thanks to political action committee (PAC) directors, party committees and name recognition—it's not surprising that the incumbent re-election rate was 93.5 percent in 2006, even in an election that many analysts dubbed "a watershed." In 2004, that rate was 98 percent.

Yet the anti-primary tide may finally be turning. OpenLeft's "Bush Dog" campaign typifies the growing interest in challenging conservative Democrats. Stoller and his blogging cohort Chris Bowers coined the term, playing on the conservative Democrats' Blue Dog Caucus in Congress. The campaign identifies Bush Dogs as Democrats who capitulated both on the Iraq War vote in May and the vote to allow warrantless wiretapping powers, thereby enabling destructive White House policies at two crucial junctures.

According to OpenLeft, 40 members of Congress qualify as Bush Dogs—half of whom are white men from the South.

Initially, Stoller and Bowers solicited activists for online profiles of Bush Dogs, then publicized their records and lobbied these lawmakers to change certain objectionable stances. The goal now, however, is to promote as many homegrown primary challenges to those 40 Bush Dogs as possible.

In addition to Illinois' Lipinski, party activists have pledged to take on Washing-

ton's Rep. Brian Baird unless he changes his position on Iraq. Georgia's Rep. Jim Marshall is facing two challengers, including Robert Nowak, an anti-war, pro-labor music teacher who entered the race after Marshall voted down the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Stoller estimates that by the 2008 primaries, five to seven Bush Dog Democrats will be forced to put up their dukes.

## The Christian Right, the Club for Growth and other right-wingers have shifted the GOP to the right by running candidates against moderate Republicans for decades.

OpenLeft isn't alone. Some labor leaders, who have been instrumental in building Democratic majorities for decades, are equally frustrated with so-called "Democrats in name only." "We would see too many representatives who sought the help of unions and progressive organizations during the campaign," says former AFL-CIO Political Director Steve Rosenthal, "but once they were elected, they would abandon their principles on the tough fights and vote with corporate interests."

In response, Rosenthal and leaders from MoveOn.org, SEIU, and other unions created two sister organizations last year to target Democrats who are out of line with their constituents. They Work For Us is an issue-based group that relays to voters where their representatives stand on topics important to workers, such as trade and the bankruptcy bill. Working For Us is the group's PAC. Rosenthal says the PAC should be active in three campaigns next election cycle, and activists are showing great interest in labor's strategy.

"When you talk to grassroots leaders and activists, it's something people get extremely excited about because they are the ones on the frontline, living day-to-day with elected officials who are so out of step with them," he says.

MoveOn may jump into the fray, as well. In early September, the organization

asked members whether they supported primary challenges against Democrats who "side with the president on Iraq."

While the results had not been released as *In These Times* went to press, MoveOn members have not been shy in supporting challengers before. For instance, Connecticut members backed Ned Lamont by a whopping 85 percent during his 2006

## Is it worth it?

Many in the Democratic grassroots have been dissatisfied with the Democratic-controlled Congress, whose leadership has failed to pass significant progressive legislation. What's more, the shift in the netroots from a highly partisan constituency to one more interested in ideology signals a tactical re-evaluation.

"Ideas matter ... and your political strategy should be organized around enacting those ideas into social change," says Stoller. "And that means you shouldn't look at everything as simply a partisan, red vs. blue operation."

Predictably, some Democrats in the center are apprehensive. "There are districts in states where an unusually good candidate, in an unusually good year, just isn't going to win if they vote the way you want them to all the time," says Ed Kilgore, managing editor of the *Democratic Strategist*, an online publication focusing on long-term Democratic strategy.

Other Democrats think running challengers in primaries may be a mistake, especially in an election year when Democrats could win the presidency and open up a sizeable majority in the House. At least 14 Bush Dogs will likely face competitive re-election campaigns next cycle, according to analyses from *The Cook Report* and *Congressional Quarterly*. That means intra-party fights could tap Democratic



From the 2007 photojournalism award-winning series, "AIDS Orphans." Photo: Mike Stocker

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resources, thereby allowing Republicans to swoop in and steal otherwise safe seats.

But back in Illinois' 3rd district, Pera says voters "are looking for a representative that more accurately reflects their values." He has argued for alternative energy innovation and strong conservation, topics he thinks incumbent Lipinski balked on by voting for Bush's energy bill. Pera is pro-choice and a strong advocate for stem cell research. He also wants a firm timeline for withdrawal from Iraq.

Voters are buying into the platform. In the last 13 days of the third quarter, Pera netted \$30,000 in small-donor contributions, outraising Lipinski by \$25,000, according to the campaign.

### Priming for primaries

Despite the concerns about Republican takeovers, primary-race challenges could improve party discipline. Incumbents would benefit from local races that force them to regularly reconnect with constituents. In the long run, ousting incumbents who are out-of-touch could save cash and time for activists who now spend limited resources lobbying conservative Democrats. More energy could be devoted to open races. Most importantly, internal challenges can give voice to voters and activists who are shunted aside when no mechanism for accountability exists.

Already in this election cycle, progressive Democrats claimed two open seats, Darcy Burner in Washington's 8th district and Eric Massa in New York's 29th. The netroots are looking to support more such candidates next year. Mike Lux, another OpenLeft contributor, says that expanding Democrats' congressional control can be mutually enforcing. Take, for instance, a standard conservative Democrat. If her district is evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans, she has more power to swing tight votes. But with wider majorities, that leverage dissipates, and suddenly she's forced to explain her vote for, say, keeping the minimum wage low. This type of accountability could minimize her right-wing tendencies.

If Pera's campaign is representative of the atmosphere across the country, Democrats' support for their party's conservative wing may be on the wane. "The response has been phenomenal," Pera says. "Democrats inside this district, within the metropolitan area of Chicago and across the country, expect Democrats to act and vote like Democrats." ■



# Supreme Court Inc.

The Roberts Court unravels a generation of progress

BY STEPHEN J. FORTUNATO JR.

**W**HILE IN LAW SCHOOL in Washington, D.C., in the late '60s, I heard Justice William O. Douglas explain at a public forum that his support for the Warren Court's "criminal law revolution" was undergirded by his fear that the nation's police stations were staffed in no small part by "crypto-fascists."

Though his pithy phrase never found its way into any of the Warren era's cases—many of which solidified the Constitution's protection for those accused of crime—Justice Douglas shared with his colleagues a passion for the Founding Fathers' luminous idea that the Bill of Rights was created to restrain, and sometimes thwart, the actions of government officials.

Along with Chief Justice Earl Warren and Associate Justices Hugo Black, William Brennan and Thurgood Marshall—as well as his more cautious brethren, Justices John Marshall Harlan and Felix Frankfurter—Douglas and his colleagues viscerally understood Chief Justice John Marshall's famous 1819 declaration that "it is a Constitution we are expounding." They protected and expanded free speech rights for antiwar and civil rights activists, and drew within the Constitution's protections many groups previously excluded: racial minorities, women, prisoners, probationers and school children.

The Bush-Roberts Court rejects this commitment to liberty and equality. Under Chief Justice John Roberts and his major domo Antonin Scalia, "the spirit of the laws" (to borrow the 18th century French philosopher Montesquieu's apt phrase) exalts order over liberty, and institutional prerogatives—governmental or private—over the individual.

There are occasional happy exceptions to this: The current court preserved confrontational rights for the accused in criminal



trials and sought to ameliorate the harshness of federal sentencing guidelines. And the 2004 Guantánamo cases curbed some of Bush's more odious powers.

Still, folk wisdom supplies the most charitable assessment of this court: Even a blind pig finds an acorn now and then.

**W**HERE DOES THIS deference to institutional power and prerogatives, with its accompanying hostility toward "average people," come from? In 1921, Justice Benjamin Cardozo suggested an answer that was as applicable then as it is today: "The great tides and currents which engulf the rest of men do not turn aside in their course and pass the judges by."

Tellingly, no member of the current Supreme Court has ever defended a person

accused of committing a felony, which means they have no experience with the dynamics of a criminal trial and have never rubbed shoulders in a dilapidated cell block with the poor and battered souls, predominantly of color, who are hauled into the nation's criminal courts. Roberts made his fortune representing the interests of corporate America, and all members of the court were corporate, academic or governmental careerists. With the exception of Justice Ginsburg's background litigating for women's reproductive freedom and fairness in the workplace, no current justice came to the high court with a reputation as a champion of civil rights or poor people.

Contrast the backgrounds of the Bush-Roberts Court with those who served prior to 1986, the beginning of the court's

## SUPREME INJUSTICE



### ***Whren v. United States* (1996)- vote 9-0**

After pulled over for a traffic violation, Michael Whren and a friend were found with crack cocaine. The court denied their motion to suppress evidence.



### ***Kelo v. City of New London* (2005)- vote 5-4**

New London, Conn., was using eminent domain to sell private property to developers. Susette Kelo argued this violated the Fifth Amendment's takings clause. The court disagreed.



### ***DaimlerChrysler Corp. v. Cuno* (2006)- vote 9-0**

Charlotte Cuno sued DaimlerChrysler after Toledo, Ohio, gave it tax exemptions and credits to expand operations. The Supreme Court found the plaintiffs had no standing to sue.



### ***Rumsfeld v. FAIR* (2006)- vote 8-0 *Alito absent***

An association of American law schools challenged the Solomon Amendment, arguing it violated the schools' First Amendment rights. The court held that the amendment was constitutional.



### ***United States v. Grubbs* (2006)- vote 8-0 *Alito absent***

Police presented an incomplete warrant upon entering Jeffrey Grubbs's home. The Court said the triggering mechanism alone was grounds for a search and seizure.



### ***Los Angeles County v. Rettele* (2007)- vote 8-1**

Police woke Max Rettele and Judy Sadler and held them naked at gunpoint until realizing it was the wrong couple. Rettele charged improper search and seizure. The court said police did not violate their privacy in any significant way.



### ***Long Island Care at Home Ltd. v. Coke* (2007)- vote 9-0**

Evelyn Coke argued she was not paid overtime hours. Her employer claimed an exemption under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The court overruled a lower court that supported Coke.



### ***Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation Inc.* (2007)- vote 5-4**

The Freedom From Religion Foundation argued that faith-based initiatives violated the First Amendment's establishment clause. The court disagreed.

—Research by Colin Meyn

demise, when Reagan elevated William Rehnquist to chief justice and appointed Scalia as associate justice. Where the Bush-Roberts Court is suffused with corporate parochialism, the Warren Court was worldly. In the aggregate, it included a former California governor (Warren); a country lawyer who defended accused moonshiners and striking miners, and later served in the U.S. Senate (Black); a brilliant strategist and litigator who kicked open the legal doors of school segregation (Marshall); a trial judge from a labor union household (Brennan); an anti-rackets prosecutor (Harlan); and a Harvard Law School professor who defended Sacco and Vanzetti (Frankfurter).

Contrary to the methodology of the Warren Court, the high court under Roberts follows in the tradition of Rehnquist. It scraps the teachings of the social sciences and ignores social realities when it suits its purposes. This is illustrated by a comparison of leading cases from the socially alert court of the Warren era and the reality-blind court of the past decade. In 1965's *Miranda v. Arizona*, the leading decision on self-incrimination is written in a style understandable by anyone who can read a newspaper. At the same time, it grounds its conclusions on a thorough and thoughtful analysis of government and academic studies, court records and history regarding police brutality and the third-degree interrogations police employed to extract confessions.

Thirty years later, in *Whren v. United States* (1996), Scalia saw no need to consider any data on racial profiling and the "driving while black" phenomenon when he wrote for a unanimous court that rejected claims by two young African-American males who said they were victims of racial profiling during a traffic stop (lingering too long at a stop sign; failure to signal a right turn, etc.). The plain-clothes officers who stopped them were assigned to a special squad concerned with drug trafficking in a "high crime" area of Washington, D.C., and were subject to a department regulation that prohibited them from enforcing traffic laws unless they observed a violation that threatened public safety.

Scalia did not reference the race of the young men until halfway through his decision, and then he scoffed in his opaque and orotund style that the intent

of the officers was of no constitutional consequence. Scalia and his colleagues, even the ones the media occasionally tags as "liberal," submitted no commentary regarding racial profiling and police practices in minority neighborhoods. For a right-wing court, like a right-wing administration, an unacknowledged problem is one that does not exist.

Scalia, who remains the court's designated hitter to swat the Fourth Amendment's prohibition against unreasonable searches and seizures into oblivion, garnered unanimous decisions in other cases involving claims against the police. No relief from unreasonable searches, said a unanimous court, for a white couple that was roused out of bed and forced to stand naked before police finally realized that the subjects of their search warrant were supposed to be African American (*Los Angeles County v. Rettele*, 2006).

Similarly in another opinion Scalia authored (*United States v. Grubbs*, 2006), a unanimous court informed police officers that they had no obligation to describe the triggering mechanism in so-called anticipatory search warrants. Police obtain these warrants after an officer's sworn representation that, at some future time, criminal activity or evidence of crime will be at a particular location. But the Supreme Court has, in effect, made these warrants perpetual by declaring that a triggering mechanism (e.g. the arrival of a particular truck at a given location) need not be described. In fairness, it must be noted that Justice Souter, joined by Justices Ginsburg and Stevens, whimpered that the better practice is to include the triggering mechanism, but they nevertheless concurred.

**N**OT ALL THE justices are always on the same page, but the court's unanimous decisions reveal frequent collusion between the conservative majority and the liberal wing. And there are few significant ideological fissures in any of the court's decisions.

The current justices are especially in lockstep with their endorsement of the existing economic order and their insensitivity to the problems of the poor and the middle class. While the Supreme Court has no mandate to redesign the economy, there are many instances where constitutional and statutory interpretation allow justices to use their discretion to choose between the



predator and the prey. The Bush-Roberts Court hunts with the predator.

In 2007, in *Long Island Care at Home Ltd. v. Coke*, the Supreme Court unanimously held that ambiguous Department of Labor regulations exempted hundreds of thousands of home health-care workers (mostly women) from minimum wage protection.

In a 2006 opinion for a unanimous court written by Roberts, the former corporate litigator, the court told taxpayers they had no right to challenge the State of Ohio's tax abatements and investment credits extended to DaimlerChrysler. Taxpayers had argued that they and their communities would sustain injury because the less money DaimlerChrysler paid, the less money the state would distribute mandated revenue to its cities.

But Roberts and his colleagues offered a short lesson in neoconservative, supply-side economics: "The very point of the tax benefits is to spur economic activity, which in turn *increases* government revenues." Apparently, the conservative activists of the Bush-Roberts Court have rejected the observation of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes that "A constitution is not intended to embody a particular economic theory."

When the *DaimlerChrysler Corp. v. Cuno* case is read together with *Kelo v. City of New London* (2005)—a controversial case permitting private homes to be condemned so that the land on which they sit can be transferred to a private developer—the result is a population stripped of all defenses against corporate power. Workers and taxpayers cannot fight against corporations that take property for the benefit of profit-making, and they are just as powerless to seek redress in court when a town's officials give the store away to a corporation.

The Bush-Roberts Court also slammed the courthouse door shut on people challenging the Bush administration's affirmative action efforts, which were really designed to insure that faith-based social programs would seek and obtain federal funding. Taking casuistry to new heights, the majority ruled in 2007's *Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation* that because the funds were coming from the administration's budget, there was no need to follow a Warren precedent, which allowed taxpayers to challenge congressional appropriations that fund textbooks for religious schools.

With rare exception, the Bush-Roberts Court has no inclination to restrain executive power.

It was this unbridled deference that led a unanimous court to uphold the Solomon amendment, which authorized a halt in federal funding for colleges and

**T**HE SUPREME COURT's reactionary agenda over the last decade has left few areas untouched by its restrictive reading of the Constitution. It has curtailed in various ways reproductive freedom, efforts to racially integrate schools, and First Amendment and privacy rights

## **Devoid of passion for civil liberties and civil rights, and oblivious to economic injustice and inequality, the Roberts court will not change its direction any time soon.**

universities that barred military recruiters access to campus. An association of law schools had prohibited campus recruiting because of the military's anti-gay "don't ask, don't tell" policy, but the high court—heedless of its own recent decision allowing the Boy Scouts of America to preserve its moral code by expelling a gay scoutmaster from its ranks, and unwilling to have the military rely on off-campus recruiting facilities—chose spinelessly not to defend the law schools' efforts to protect a marginalized minority (*Rumsfeld v. FAIR*, 2006).

of high school students.

Devoid of passion for civil liberties and civil rights, and oblivious to economic injustice and inequality, this court will not change its direction any time soon. As for the possibility of change in the future, the task for progressives is to begin insisting that Democratic presidential candidates pledge now that any Supreme Court nominee during their administration will be drawn from the human rights, civil rights and racial justice communities. Not from the corporate structure that perpetuates the power of the elite. ■



# Funding Iraq's Citizen Soldiers

Is the Pentagon's neighborhood watch strategy protecting Iraqis or stoking the civil war?

BY JESSICA PUPOVAC

**T**HE U.S.-LED COALITION FORCES in Iraq have gone populist, empowering a "movement" of local sheikhs, former insurgents and ordinary Iraqis—encouraging them to take up arms and patrol their communities for themselves. "Concerned Citizens Groups," which military representatives describe as similar to "neighborhood watch groups," have become a centerpiece of U.S. strategy.

The model takes its inspiration from the summer's "Anbar Awakening," in which Sunni sheikhs, fed up with insurgent brutality, enlisted U.S. support to drive them out of their villages. The movement has now taken on a life of its own.

"They are coming to us," U.S. Army Col. Wayne Grigsby told *In These Times* in a phone interview from Forward Operating Base Hammer, in Diyala, just east of Baghdad. "It's grassroots. I don't usually use that word, but that's what it is."

However, unlike most grassroots movements, a lot of money is involved. Those who have signed contracts with the U.S. military earn about \$300 per month for their services—more than three times Iraq's average monthly per capita income. They also receive \$50 to \$100 bonuses for "actionable intelligence."

But it's only after these Concerned Citizens drive al Qaeda and other insurgents out of an area that their communities can become eligible for a windfall of development projects, including electrical wiring, running water, medical assistance and additional work.

"Basically, the tribal leaders are realizing that if they don't participate, they'll be left behind as security and services improve," Army Col. David Sutherland told a virtual "bloggers' roundtable" in October.

Recruitment hasn't been a problem. As of Oct. 20, there were 67,000 Concerned Citizens across Iraq, organized into 180 groups in 12 of the country's 18 provinces, according to Army Col. Martin N.



**A volunteer Concerned Citizen, with a 155mm artillery round, is escorted by fellow volunteers in Tuwaitha, on Sept. 5.**

SGT. TIMOTHY KINGSTON, 55TH COMBAT CAMERA

Stanton, chief of reconciliation and engagement operations. The vast majority of Concerned Citizens (79 percent) are Sunni, while 9 percent are Shiite and the remaining 12 percent are "mixed."

Concerned Citizens take an oath of allegiance to the Iraqi government, sign a contract, receive basic training from U.S. forces and are given some type of uniform—be it a vest, an armband or a jacket—to distinguish them from enemy combatants.

Although the rules of engagement vary depending on local conditions, Concerned Citizens are typically contracted as "security guards," tasked with protecting infrastructure. Sometimes that means patrolling neighborhoods and villages, or seeking leads on insurgents' plans and whereabouts. Other times it means integrating into missions led by the U.S. or Iraqi Armies.

Some Concerned Citizens groups go by names like Iraqi Police Volunteers and Concerned Local Nationals. Others have

gang-like names for their regions, such as the Baquba Guardians. They are expected to provide their own weapons, usually AK-47s or newer rifles bought with their earnings.

Military officials, including Stanton, admit that "many of our former opponents" have made their way into the ranks, despite a screening process intended to weed out former enemy combatants.

Despite this tenuous foundation, U.S. military spokesman Rear Adm. Gregory Smith says the Concerned Citizens are a key reason that violence in Iraq is on the decline. Concerned Citizens, he says, are pointing out insurgents, identifying weapons caches, guarding checkpoints, detonating roadside bombs and, ultimately, securing neighborhoods.

The number of roadside bombs has decreased by an astounding 60 percent in the past four months. U.S. casualties are at the lowest monthly rate since February 2006. And, perhaps most importantly,

many Iraqis report feeling safe enough to leave their homes and send their children to school.

"[Iraqis] want their families to have a better life," Grigsby says. "It's like us—we want power, we want to give our kids clean drinking water, we want them to have some chow and go to school and be safe and educated." He added: "They are getting tired of insurgents."

**C**RITICS SAY THAT while substantial security gains have been made, the new strategy is ultimately short-sighted and, moreover, in direct conflict with the Bush administration's ultimate goal—national reconciliation.

"Arming all sides in this civil war is just going to create a bloodier conflict," says Sean Duggan, special assistant to the National Security team at the Center for American Progress. "We don't give them weapons, but we give them money, which is the same thing." He calls these groups "a short term solution that in the long run is going to blow up in our faces."

However, according to Grigsby, the military is implementing measures to counteract that very real threat. "We're keeping our eyes on them," he says. "That's why their contracts come up every 60 to 90 days."

The military also attempts to rein in Concerned Citizens groups by prohibiting them from conducting unilateral operations. But it is a rule not all recognize. In mid-October, a group of 17 Concerned Citizens in Sutherland's area of operations in Baquba captured prisoners, amassed their own weapons cache and sexually assaulted a local girl, according to the Multi-National Force press team.

Critics, including Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, fear this type of renegade behavior might become more prevalent as Concerned Citizens, many of whom already distrust the Shiite-dominated central government, morph into armed Sunni militias, emboldening tribal strongmen and challenging the legitimacy of the central government.

In early October, al-Maliki threatened to rein in the program after accusations emerged that a Sunni Concerned Citizens Group in Baghdad was complicit in kidnapping, blackmail and murder.

"We demand that the American administration stop this adventure," his United Iraqi Alliance Party said in an early October statement. "We refuse and denounce giving protection to those terrorists who

committed hideous crimes against the Iraqi people and allowing them to be responsible for security."

The feeling is mutual. Many Sunnis view al-Maliki's government with suspicion and charge that al-Maliki himself is a puppet of Iran. The August U.S. National Intelligence Estimate acknowledged that Sunni cooperation with Coalition Forces has "not yet translated into broad Sunni Arab support for the Iraqi government or widespread willingness to work with the Shiites."

Former Defense Secretary and member of the Iraq Study Group, William J. Perry, echoed that observation in his testimony before the Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees in September. He said that the Concerned Citizens Groups "could become a liability if they turned against the Shiite militias or even Iraqi government forces."

According to Ret. U.S. Lt. Gen. William Odom, the situation is becoming one in which the U.S. army is "arming the enemies of the government whose election and legitimacy we sponsored."

"The muddled, contradictory and ludicrous nature of this policy would deserve a horse laugh if it were not so tragic," says Odom, who served as the Army's senior intelligence officer under Reagan. There is "no example where stable states were created by diffusing weapons and power to local and regional groups."

Supporting "friendly" militias has backfired on multiple operations—most notably Afghanistan, where the U.S. government armed the mujahadeen and Osama bin Laden in its battle against the Soviets.

Empowering locals to "police" their neighbors also backfired in Vietnam in the '70s and Guatemala in the '80s, where the strategy added additional weapons and training to already-bloody conflicts. Rather than fostering reconciliation, says Odom, the strategy has, time and time again, "led to civil war, chaos and sometimes the disappearance of states."

But U.S. forces are betting, with all of their chips, that this time will be different. The U.S. military hopes to prevent fueling a civil war by transitioning Concerned Citizens into permanent, paid positions with the Iraqi government Security Forces (ISF). Already, U.S. pressure has placed 1,600 former Concerned Citizens in the ISF, according to Air Force Col. Donald Bacon, chief of operational plans for the Multi-National Force in Iraq. And they are working to bring more into the fold.

However, the Iraqi government has been reluctant to hire senior officers from the academy's ranks, and al-Maliki's administration has shown little political will to add additional officers from the predominantly Sunni candidate pool. The 1,600 that have been hired (which represent less than 1 percent of ISF) have been integrated only because of intense U.S. pressure.

David Kilcullen, who just completed a tour as the top counterinsurgency adviser to the U.S. command in Iraq, warned in the online magazine *Small Wars Journal* that there is a threat of Concerned Citizens splintering Iraq.

"This will play out in ways that may be good or bad," he wrote, but more than anything, the strategy is "fundamentally unpredictable."

Kilcullen isn't alone in his concern. At another bloggers' roundtable on Nov. 2, Stanton said that, although he didn't believe the Sunnis had the numbers to pose a real threat, if they "get discouraged at the continuous rebuff," it could lead them to secede from Iraq or "pick up insurgency again."

The possibility, he said, "haunts" him. ■

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# The Democrats' Path to Victory

The public demand for progressive politics is growing stronger

BY DAVID MOBERG

**V**OTERS ARE LIKELY TO choose the next president primarily on economic issues, especially if the financial crises deepen. But they will also decide the election based on concerns about the war in Iraq and, more broadly, America's place in the world.

On both counts—the pocketbook and the globe—Democrats hold an advantage. But to retain that advantage, Democrats will need to redefine the terms of debate on America's global role.

That's happening in small, if inadequate, ways on both the war in Iraq and trade issues. The danger is that the Democrats will defensively hedge against the inevitable Republican attack machine on foreign policy and pander to their newly generous corporate financial backers on trade. They would then fail to connect with voters' deep sense of dissatisfaction, not just with Bush, but with longer-term trends in American foreign policy.

Most Americans don't think the administration's global and domestic policies are working. "Democrats have not yet found their voice as agents of change, except perhaps on Iraq," write Democracy Corps political strategists Stan Greenberg, Al Quinlan and James Carville. "If 2008 is to bring a tidal wave, Democrats and progressives must become more fully the voice of what is wrong with these times. It is not enough to be anti-Iraq and anti-Bush."

Democracy Corps polling supports this populist reading of the electorate. Given a list of phrases that reflect both conservative and progressive explanations, the top two choices among people who think the country is off course were "big businesses get whatever they want in Washington" (40 percent) and "leaders have forgotten the middle class" (38 percent).

But Democracy Corps also reports that the populist inclinations of Democrats and

independents diverge, giving Republicans a political wedge opportunity. Democratic voters were most concerned about Iraq spending, healthcare inaction, and job loss to China and India. Independents cared most about unprotected borders, oil dependence and job loss. Thus, immigration emerges as a potential political problem for Democratic candidates, even though most Americans reject draconian crackdowns on immigrants.

Current debates about Iraq and globalization—in Congress and among the presidential candidates—show that Democrats have failed to take advantage of this progressive shift in public opinion.

Iraq—now spilling over to encompass

Iran—remains by far the most important global issue for voters. Roughly two out of every three Americans oppose the war in Iraq, and three out of five want the troops out within a year, according to CNN/Opinion Research. What's more, a solid majority wants out even if the military has not restored order, according to a September *Washington Post*/ABC polls.

People now trust Democrats more than Republicans on the war, but 55 percent still said that congressional Democrats had not gone far enough in opposing it, according to the same poll.

In the presidential race, the top three Democrats—Sens. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, and former Sen. John Ed-



STAN HONDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**Union workers demonstrate against a free trade agreement between Peru and the United States in front of the International Labor Organization's headquarters in Lima on Aug. 7.**



EITAN ABRAMOVICH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

wards—have all committed to starting the withdrawal of troops, saying they would leave residual forces in Iraq and the surrounding area, possibly through the end of their first term. Edwards argues that, unlike Clinton, he would end combat operations within a year, and Obama insists he would leave a smaller, less ambitious residual force than Clinton. But New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson has made a bid for anti-war voters, calling for prompt and complete withdrawal (as has long-time war opponent Rep. Dennis Kucinich).

Clinton's opponents have criticized her vote for the Kyl-Lieberman amendment, which declares Iran's Revolutionary Guards a terrorist group and sets the stage for Bush to attack Iran. In response, Clinton said she did not support a "rush to war," but did not rule out an attack on Iran.

**O**VER THE PAST five years, the public has steadily opposed the reliance on U.S. military strength over multilateral diplomacy for security. Three-fourths of Americans favor international cooperation over either withdrawing from international affairs or being the top world leader or dominant power, according to the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy (PIPA). And nearly as many think that unilateral action against terrorism just makes the United States a bigger terrorist target. According to PIPA's research, Americans overwhelmingly think that goodwill of other countries to-

ward the United States is important but that the world views the country negatively because it dislikes American policies—not American values.

Republicans consistently beat Democrats in the polls on who would ensure a strong military and, by declining margins, on who can best protect national security or fight terrorists. After all, Republicans are adept at creating a culture of fear about foreign threats. And the military-industrial complex continues to exercise tremendous influence.

"I can't imagine any president of either party standing up to the extreme powerful interests of the Pentagon and CIA in any effective way," says Chalmers Johnson, author of *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic*.

But on fundamental issues, Americans say they want a radically different foreign policy. Democrats need to emphasize that abandoning militarily aggressive policies and working cooperatively with other nations will make Americans more secure.

Granted, as a woman, Hillary Clinton faces biased questions about whether she can be a forceful leader. But it's time to make the case that a president can be tough without being belligerent and stupid. Trying to distinguish themselves from both Bush and Clinton, Obama and Edwards argue for diplomatic talks with Iran, an offer of incentives as well as economic sanctions, and less aggressiveness (ruling out ambitions for "regime change," ac-

cording to Obama, or "preventive war," according to Edwards).

"An unapologetic, pragmatic, progressive foreign policy would come across more appealing than desperate attempts to be appear tough," says Stephen Zunes, a foreign policy expert at the University of San Francisco. "If you surrender the whole basis of debate to Republicans, rather than change the terms of the debate, you'll seem weaker."

**D**EMOCRATS NEED TO change the terms of debate on globalization, as well. Most Americans see globalization as somewhat positive, especially for consumers. But increasingly, the public—including educated workers—sees globalization as a threat to U.S. jobs, incomes and economic security, and as a boon to corporations.

More than two out of every three Americans view trade as harmful for U.S. workers' job security, and 60 percent call it detrimental for job creation, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs reported last spring. Even 59 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say that foreign trade has been bad for the U.S. economy, according to a late September NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll.

Many of the architects of Bill Clinton's NAFTA-style approach to globalization—such as former economic adviser Gene Sperling and former Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers—now acknowledge that those policies have hurt American workers, contributing to inequality as a tiny elite captures virtually all of the nation's income and productivity growth.

Around the world, opposition grows to the U.S. brand of corporate globalization. In October, the United States used last minute threats of economic reprisal to swing Costa Rican public opinion in favor of ratifying the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

Yet key Democrats in Congress continue to push for Bush-negotiated trade deals, even as they begin shifting their positions on trade. Reps. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) and Sandy Levin (D-Mich.) negotiated with the Bush administration to include provisions in the Peruvian free trade agreement to protect labor rights and the environment with enforcement through standard trade tribunals.

Congressional critics, such as Rep. Phil Hare (D-Ill.), question why Rangel and Levin were in a rush to approve the Peru

agreement. It contains all of the heavily criticized NAFTA rules on investor rights, government procurement and other corporate protectionism.

Proponents of labor rights disagree about how enforceable the labor and environmental protections may be, given the wording of the Peru treaty. AFL-CIO experts believe that the treaty's reference to the international labor organization's core labor rights includes the more specific and enforceable ILO conventions. But Columbia law professor Mark Barenberg argues that in several regards the Peru agreement is "even worse than existing [trade and labor rights] law." Tom Donohue, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, has few doubts: "We are encouraged by assurances that the labor provisions cannot be read to require compliance with the conventions."

While some unions—such as Unite Here and the Teamsters—opposed the Peru agreement, others withheld support. Environmental groups had a similar mixed sense of a narrow achievement within a flawed overall framework.

Labor unions, environmentalists and other progressive groups are gearing up for more aggressive opposition to pending free trade agreements with Panama, South Korea and Colombia, which has the world's worst record of violence against trade unions. The Bush administration is promoting the Colombian agreement as a way to combat Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's influence in Latin America—swaying at least a few Democratic legislators, like New York Reps. Elliot Engel and Gregory Meeks.

Democrats need to offer more than slightly improved trade deals or even strengthened trade adjustment assistance for displaced workers to make the global economy work for American workers.

Kenneth Scheve, professor of political science at Yale, and Matthew Slaughter, professor of economics at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth, write in the July/August issue of *Foreign Affairs* that even workers who do not lose their jobs will lose income in a globalized economy, and that consequently the federal government should change the tax code to redistribute income from the wealthy to low- and moderate-income workers.

"The issues are way beyond whether we have this or that free trade agreement, or how do we make the deal OK," says Economic Policy Institute founder Jeff Faux, author of *The Global Class War*. "The

idea that you can fool around with these trade agreements and get better language doesn't deal with the larger questions of the United States' financial situation or the question of who are these corporations, and who do they represent?"

Among the leading presidential candi-

agreements, distancing herself slightly from her husband's hallmark action.

"I think we've seen a huge shift, if you think back to the days when Al Gore was the spokesman for NAFTA against Ross Perot, compared to now, when all of the Democratic candidates are critical to some

## **As a woman, Hillary Clinton faces biased questions about whether she can be a forceful leader. But a president can be tough without being belligerent and stupid.**

dates, Edwards has most forcefully criticized corporate globalization and opposed all pending trade deals. Obama made a plant closing as a result of production shift overseas a major part of his Senate campaign, but on the presidential campaign trail he has not been a consistent or profound critic of globalization. (Unlike Edwards, Obama supported the Peru trade deal, even as all three leading candidates announced opposition to the Korean pact and earlier opposed the Central American Free Trade Agreement.) Clinton has called for a "time out" on trade deals and a periodic reassessment of NAFTA and other

degree of trade policies," says Sarah Anderson, global economy project director at the Institute for Policy Studies, a progressive think tank. "But we don't have a commitment to complete overhaul." And the rebound in corporate contributions to Democrats raises the specter of increased business influence on a new Democratic administration.

The American people appear ready for an approach to foreign policy and globalization that serves working people more than corporate elites. But it's not clear yet that the eventual Democratic standard-bearer will seize that opportunity. ■



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BY EMILY UDELL

## Dark Side of Russia's Rainbow

Rainbow banners. Colorful costumes. Thumping music. Waving politicians. These are some modern-day trappings of a typical gay pride parade in any major U.S. city. But it's a far cry from the scene of this year's pride march in Moscow, where participants were

ridiculed, beaten and arrested for daring to demonstrate publicly in a country where homosexuality was a crime until 1993.

Among those arrested this year was Nikolai Alexeyev, a founder of the gay rights organization Gay Russia. In the past two years, Alexeyev helped organize the first pride marches in Moscow, knowing he would face opposition from the hundreds of people who turned out to protest the events. The city government refused to issue official permits for the demonstrations, citing concerns for public safety, and the 29-year-old lawyer was beaten and swiftly detained by police both years.

It wasn't the first time Alexeyev was punished for trying to bring gay issues to the table. In college in Moscow, administrators silenced Alexeyev when he tried to present academic work on homophobia. But despite political, legal and religious pressures, he has worked to combat prejudice and secure legal and political protections for Russia's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. He says his public fight for equality has made significant progress for the LGBT community and other minority groups in his country since Gay Russia's founding two years ago.

*In These Times* caught up with Alexeyev in October when he was in the United States taking part in several events—including a march commemorating the death of Matthew Shepard—with the Chicago-based activist group Gay Liberation Network.

**What made you decide to become a public figure in the fight for gay rights in your country?**

In the beginning I was studying law at Lomonosov Moscow State University. At that time I was trying to write a doctorate on the issues of gay rights and I was denied the right to present it as a document of scientific work at the university because of discrimination. It led to a lawsuit against the university, which is still pending at the European Court of Human Rights. I still published this work as two books. After that, I realized that it wouldn't be possible to change things in Russia just by writing and I decided I should be involved in more activist work and try to bring changes for LGBT rights.

**What are some of the legal, political and religious obstacles you face in advancing the rights of the LGBT community in Russia?**

Homosexuality was decriminalized in Russia in 1993. From 1993 to 2005, the topic was mostly out of the political sphere. Gays were not really fighting for their rights for the last decade. Not until 2005, when our organization Gay Russia appeared, did it start to come back on the political agenda.

Legally, apart from the fact that homosexuality is not a crime anymore, there are absolutely no rights for same-sex couples. There is no ban on discrimination. There is no anti-hate crime legislation.

The Russian Orthodox Church, which is very powerful in Russia and is where the

majority of the Russian population goes, is fighting against homosexuals and they are always talking against, for example, gay parades or any other public appearance of homosexuals. Politicians are also following this stance and they are talking against any public appearance of, as they call it, the "propaganda of homosexuality."

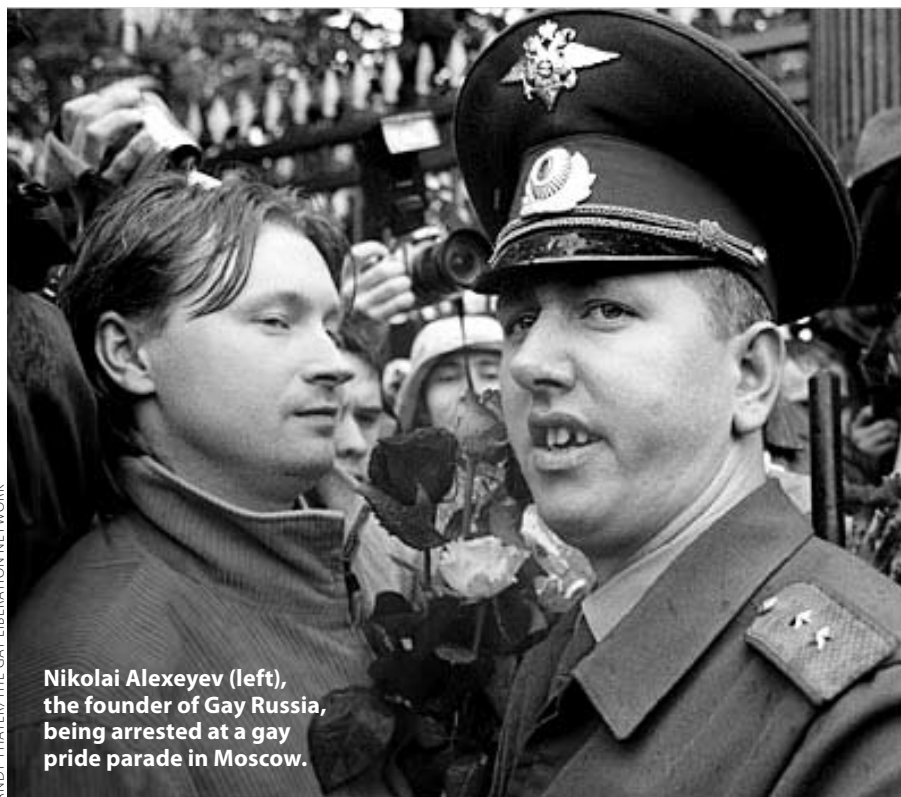
There were several attempts to bring a bill to the parliament to forbid the "propaganda of homosexuality," which failed, but, from time to time, it is discussed at the political level.

**I understand that some people who were representing the church participated in the protests against the pride parades that you helped organize.**

Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church went out in the streets—both last year and this year—to protest against the participants in the gay parade. We had priests who came in BMWs of the latest possible model to the city hall where we organized the rally. They came to bless the protesters, the neofascists and the nationalists. They were there on the streets in their robes and crosses. It really was a terrible face of the Russian Orthodox Church. And at the same time, the Church never admits officially that it went on the streets like that to protest against the gay pride parade.

**Have any advances been made in establishing legal structures for dealing with hate crimes against homosexuals?**

This is a really big problem in Russia right now. We see this happening in Moscow and St. Petersburg, where people are beaten up by protesters or by the neofascists. Usually these people get very short sentences—three or four years for hooliganism and not for beating people or for murder. Usually the state and police are trying to represent it as just a murder or an attempt to rob someone. The state is not really doing much to fight against



Nikolai Alexeyev (left), the founder of Gay Russia, being arrested at a gay pride parade in Moscow.

crimes directed against homosexual people and also against foreigners and other ethnic minorities.

### **How have things changed for the LGBT community in Russia since you helped organize the first gay pride march?**

We have managed to bring the issue of rights for homosexual people on the political agenda, which was not the case in 2005. For example, in 2002, there were attempts in parliament to criminalize homosexual relations. It was seriously discussed and voted on. It failed, but this is where we were just five years ago.

And the media attention has increased significantly. When we launched our organization in May 2005, there was not a single journalist interested in the rights of homosexual people. No one came to the press conference that we organized. But the last press conference for Moscow Pride in May 2007 gathered about 100 journalists and about 20 TV cameras from Russia and from abroad. The issue is being discussed on TV regularly.

So in two years we really managed to bring this issue into the political agenda. The Russian President Vladimir Putin for the first time said something on gay issues. This is the biggest achievement.

Also, we brought the case of the ban

on Moscow Pride to the European Court of Human Rights against the Russian authorities. This is going to be considered and they know very well that they will lose it. So there will be a legal decision for the first time ever against the Russian authorities on gay issues.

### **How many more people participated in the march this year than the first year?**

The first year, there were about 50 people on our side. This year, there were about 150 people who were taking part on the streets. But the event was banned, and the people who went out on the street were risking quite a lot—not only by being attacked, but also by being seen on TV.

### **Can you describe what it was like being on the ground during this year's march?**

It was a very tense and very aggressive atmosphere. The first year it was scarier because there were crowds of protesters, maybe 600 or 700 people who went on the streets just to protest gays, and 50 representatives of the LGBT community. There were crowds of policemen who were trying to avoid clashes and to arrest people from both sides.

This year, there were fewer protesters, but at the same time, several people were seriously attacked.

**You've talked about some of the advances that have been made in raising the profile of gay rights. But how about the day-to-day life for a gay person in Moscow and in other parts of Russia?**

It's very different if we compare, for example, Moscow and St. Petersburg with all the rest of the country. In Moscow and St. Petersburg, there is the infrastructure for gay entertainment. People have some places to go, like gay bars and clubs and other places where people can meet. The level of tolerance in the major cities is much higher than in the smaller cities or villages. They have problems with work and it's much more difficult to live there.

But in Moscow there are problems, too, because there is a concentration of political powers and these nationalist groups that are fighting against gays. And there were lots of cases of gays being beaten up when they left the gay clubs. There were cases of people being fired from work.

In the majority of cases, people do not go to the police because they're scared that their homosexuality will be known to their friends and family members and at work. Or because they think the police will not investigate it or that they will just say that it's their own fault that something had happened to them.

### **Is there anything else that you'd like people to know about the situation in Russia?**

I would like to stress that the fight for LGBT rights in Russia is the frontline of the fight for all human rights. What we see now in Russia is a diminishing of human dignity and human rights. It's not only for gay people, but people in general.

There is no free press now. There are no free elections. Journalists are being attacked and even killed sometimes. We witnessed the building up of an authoritarian regime. All the activities that we do in the future will be helpful not only for gays but for other social groups.

For example, the case that we have in the European Court on the freedom of expression for gay people will have a big impact on public events and on the freedom of expression of all the other social groups because it will concern the freedom of assembly. That's the most important thing to underline: We're not only fighting for our own rights, but for human rights. ■

*For more information, visit [www.gayrussia.ru](http://www.gayrussia.ru) and [www.gayliberation.net](http://www.gayliberation.net).*



First came the 2003 bombing of Baghdad; then came the neoliberal economists.

MIRROPIX/GETTY IMAGES

BY CHRISTOPHER HAYES

## The New Road to Serfdom

In the early '80s, as Margaret Thatcher attempted to hack away at England's substantial public sector, she found a frustrating degree of public resistance. The closer she got to the bone, the more the patient wriggled and withdrew. Thatcher doggedly

persisted, yet her pace wasn't fast enough for right-wing Austrian economist Friedrich von Hayek, her idol and ideological mentor. You see, in 1981, Hayek had traveled to Gen. Augusto Pinochet's Chile, where, under the barbed restraints of dictatorship and with the guidance of University of Chicago-trained economists, Pinochet had gouged out nearly every vestige of the public sector, privatizing everything from utilities to the Chilean state pension program. Hayek returned gushing, and wrote Thatcher, urging her to follow Chile's aggressive model more faithfully.

In her reply, Thatcher explained tersely that "in Britain, with our democratic institutions and the need for a higher degree of consent, some of the measures adopted in Chile are quite unacceptable. Our reform must be in line with our traditions and our Constitution. At times, the process may seem painfully slow."

The Hayek/Thatcher exchange is one of many revealing historical nuggets unearthed in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Naomi Klein's ambitious history of neoliberalism. Hayek isn't the star of *The Shock Doctrine*—that dubious honor goes to his protégé and fellow Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman. But Klein's totemic, capacious and brilliant alternate history of the last three decades of global political economy can best be understood as a latter-day response to Hayek's classic right-wing manifesto, *The Road to Serfdom*.

Written in exile, while Europe burned, *The Road to Serfdom's* simple but powerful thesis was that the encroachment of the state into economic affairs inevitably leads to an encroachment in all spheres. For Hayek and his intellectual descendants—from Friedman (Milton) to Friedman (Thomas)—political



freedom and economic freedom were inseparable and mutually reinforcing. And over the last 30 years, the adherents of the Friedman/Hayek School have pointed to two coincidental trends in global political economy to back this grand claim: First, the fall of command-and-control economies and the dismantling of welfare states. The second, the rise of democratic governance. With cunning aplomb, neoliberal writers and historians have packaged these two distinct phenomena together as one single story of progress and development. Look: Freedom's on the march!

Klein resurrects Hayek's argument and inverts it, showing how time and again, the "economic freedom" envisioned by Hayek and his ilk has been imposed *at the expense* of political freedom, often, Klein writes, "midwived by the most brutal forms of coercion." From Chile to Iraq, majorities empowered to choose their own government don't start clamoring for flat taxes, privatized post offices and an end to controls on foreign capital. Instead, they often form unions or call for increased social spending. *The Shock Doctrine* is an encyclopedic catalog of the tactics that governments, corporations and economists have used to impose—usually over popular opposition—what Klein calls the "policy trinity" of the Chicago-school program: "the elimination of the public sphere, total liberation for corporations and skeletal social spending."

Over the course of 500 pages, Klein documents the moments of chaos and disruption that allow a small coterie of experts to swoop in and administer what's invariably called "bitter medicine," "painful reforms" or "shock therapy." "Only crisis," she quotes Milton Friedman as once observing, "actual or perceived, produces real change." While Klein calls this the "shock doctrine," I prefer a phrase she quotes from former World Bank Chief Economist Joseph Stiglitz, who called those who imposed free-market "shock therapy" on Russia in the early '90s "market Bolsheviks." Like Lenin, these economic policy-makers saw opportunity in crisis, and were skeptical, even contemptuous of democratic pieties. They were convinced that only an enlightened vanguard would be able to take the painful, sometimes bloody steps necessary to bring about revolution. The most extreme of them also shared with

Lenin the impulse to start anew, to wipe out history, to work off a blank slate. They held the perverse belief that a proposal's ideological purity is directly proportional to the pain and disruption it causes.

Klein's history begins in Chile in 1973 and ends in Sri Lanka after the 2005 tsunami. Some of the material—like the grisly

across the newly "liberated" country.

Meanwhile, as mercenaries ran roughshod, the privatization of war produced perverse incentives for the corporations that benefited from the chaos. Amid the increasing chaos, a gutted public sector struggled to implement its vision for a new Iraq through layers of subcontract-

## **From Chile to Iraq, majorities empowered to choose their own government don't start clamoring for flat taxes and privatized post offices. They often form unions instead.**

details of the '70s South American dictatorships' dirty wars on unionists, dissidents and leftists—will be familiar to lefty readers. But even on familiar terrain, Klein has a remarkable eye for the revealing detail or the telling quote. She points out that during Argentina's military dictatorship in the late '70s and early '80s, the Galerías Pacifico mall, "the crown jewel of Buenos Aires' shopping district," contained a basement torture center where detainees had scratched pleas for help into the wall. "For Argentines who know their history," she writes, "the mall stands as a chilling reminder that ... the Chicago School Project was quite literally built on the secret torture camps where thousands of people who believed in a different country disappeared."

If the "shock doctrine" was born amid violence and repression in South America, and then developed less openly repressive means of influence—such as through the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment programs in developing countries—Klein argues it has now reached a kind of final frontier. Having snatched the low hanging fruit, it has in its sights the Middle East's oil-dominated state economies and the developed world's last remaining un-privatized functions: fighting wars and providing security.

In Iraq, the dangers of these two projects have come together and been made most horribly manifest. Paul Bremer, the former U.S. administrator to Iraq, issued orders immediately privatizing the state's factories, dismissing the state bureaucracy (including, but not limited to the Army) and imposing a flat tax, all while putting down spontaneous expressions of democracy and protest that had broken out

tors. (Klein notes that in Germany, after reunification, a staff of 8,000 government workers oversaw the privatization of the state's vast holdings. In Iraq, that number was three.) "In short," she writes, "the [Coalition Provisional Authority] was itself too privatized to privatize Iraq."

The sole achievement of the U.S. occupation thus far has been the transfer of billions of dollars of public money into the private coffers of those companies that managed to get their hands on lucrative government contracts. This, to Klein's mind, is the whole *raison d'être* behind the "corporatist state."

But Iraq is complicated. Klein gives a persuasive account of why the insurgency emerged when it did. However, no single interpretative framework seems up to the task of fully ordering and untangling the various combustible worldviews now fighting it out in Iraq.

This raises the central flaw in *The Shock Doctrine*: The structure of her argument requires her to whittle down some events in order to make them fit, in the process shedding their multifaceted and culturally specific influences and rationales. This tendency is exacerbated by the book's title and the animating metaphor introduced in the opening chapter. In it, Klein describes a series of horrifying CIA-funded experiments undertaken by a sadistic Canadian doctor in the '50s. Subjects were shocked, against their will, into states of highly suggestible infantilism, and the results were enshrined in the CIA's so-called "Kubark" manual, which Klein alleges has become a handbook for American interrogators during the war on terror. The chapter is chilling. But once the book moves into

documenting the full spectrum of anti-democratic strategies employed by neo-liberalism's proponents, the potency of the metaphor dissipates. "Shock" describes everything from the actual shock of electric volts used against disappeared leftists in Chile and Argentina to the metaphorical shock of the transition from communism in Russia and Eastern Europe. Even the fairly routine political capital Thatcher accrued in the wake of England's victory in the Falklands War is a shock.

The problem is, the more Klein's concept of "shock" accounts for, the less it explains. In South Africa, for example, Klein interviews African National Congress (ANC) leaders to find out how their once socialist, anti-apartheid movement later became a neoliberal government. She finds that, basically, they got hustled. During initial negotiations over the transfer of power, business interests and international financial institutions extracted seemingly innocuous and technical concessions that constitutionally restricted the ANC government from following through on its popular, social democratic promises. That's a revealing anecdote of the anti-democratic sophistication of the vanguard of global capital, but it's a long way from torture chambers and electric volts.

If *The Shock Doctrine* overreaches at times, its central contention is spot on. The force and permanence of a book like this can change outlooks and systems. Just ask the generations of thinkers who've been influenced by *The Road to Serfdom*. That book may be massively over-simplified and tendentious, but Hayek's strong arguments—along with the repeated bloodshed and tyranny of so many communist governments around the world—helped force the anti-democratic left and its sympathizers to take a hard look in the mirror. At a certain point, it became impossible to continue to excuse purges, starvation and gulags as some kind of unfortunate distortion of their true vision.

My hope is that Klein's book can do the same for the many partisans of Friedman-style economic policy, who have convinced themselves that their utopian vision is beautiful even if its implementers have been ugly. Klein has dragged out the bodies and plastered the self-incriminating memos for all to see. If her argument can become as prominent in the next 50 years as Hayek's was over the previous half century, the world will be a better place. ■



## Kids LOL @ Navy Recruiters

By Aaron Sarver

**T**EENAGERS, BE WARNED: Military recruiters have armed themselves with "Wat up, dude?" and "nmu" in their effort to lure you to Iraq. (For those who lack daily interaction with teens, "nmu" means "Not much. You?")

As headlines reveal that the military is lowering standards to meet its recruiting goals, the Pentagon is trying new techniques to connect with Millennials—those born between 1980 and 2000, formerly known as Generation Y.

In September, the website Entropic Memes reported that attendees at last spring's Annual Navy Workforce Research and Analysis Conference were given a slideshow presentation titled "The Road to a 2025 Total Force: Talkin' 'bout Their Generation."

At the presentation, ad executive Arthur Mitchell, director of strategic planning for Campbell-Ewald, the agency behind the Navy's Accelerate Your Life campaign, talked about the inability of Navy recruiters to connect with today's young people.

Millennials, he explained, are "narcissistic praise junkies" and "a somewhat alien life force." To help recruiters communicate with such bizarre life forms, Mitchell presented a pop culture quiz,

asking recruiters to identify members of Green Day and the Black Eyed Peas (two popular bands). In addition to getting them up to speed on today's music, he showed them the ins and outs of text messaging and emoticons.

"At first contact, the Navy world is going to be too real to digest," according to the slideshow presentation, "akin to the 'The real world' in Matrix." It goes on to say, "Teach them. Guide them. Mentor them. Bull@\*#% them, and they will just walk away."

The typical kid today, the report says, has the following characteristics:

- Many of their experiences have been secondhand.
- A sizable part of their life has been spent in a virtual world rather than in the real world.
- The television/computer screen has always acted as a 'screen' that has kept them away from many direct real world interactions.
- Their 'B.S.' barometer is very high.
- Status and authority will not impress them, bureaucracy and red tape will frustrate them and a patronizing attitude will drive them crazy.
- Perhaps they'll even expect their parents to "rescue" them.
- They are used to instant gratification and praise.

Mitchell underscored that Millenni-



als are tightly bound to their parents. A slide titled “The ‘Coddled’ Generation” explained that these young people were “raised by active, involved, ‘helicopter’ parents who challenge poor grades, negotiate with soccer coaches, visit college campuses, question employers, etc.” (The term “helicopter parent” means someone who hovers over their kids, ever ready to touch down and help out.) The challenge for recruiters then is not only to convince the kids, but also their parents. “This generation actually likes their parents, somewhat of a departure from previous generations,” Mitchell said.

The Army first reached out to parents in 2005 as part of its Army of One campaign by advertising giant Leo Burnett. These ads were directed by Samuel Bayer, who made his mark directing Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit” video.

Since then, the Army has changed its ad slogan to Army Strong, which targets parents with the slogan “You made them strong, we’ll make them Army strong.” At the GoArmy.com website, a “For Par-

ents” link features videos from parents who have children serving. These videos retread the usual Army themes—see the world, learn self-discipline and go to college. Although the Army may have been a good life experience for these kids and their families, these days, a slick commercial with an inspiring soundtrack won’t necessarily persuade media savvy parents, many of whom are Gen Xers.

“No matter what, Navy experiences will only be a Google search away,” reads one bullet point in the second half of the slideshow. But also a Google search away, Millennials can find unflattering information from troops in Iraq, like the photos leaked in 2003 from Abu Ghraib.

In *Army of None: Strategies to Counter Military Recruitment, End War and Build a Better World*, authors Aimee Allison and David Solnit document that recruiters lie. They lie about job training, the likelihood of being deployed to a battle zone and the size of bonuses. “Among recruits who sign up for the Montgomery G.I. Bill,” the authors write, “65 percent receive no money for

college.” Knowing this, “kids today are less likely to join the military because they want to go to college,” Solnit said in an interview.

As for the \$1,200 nonrefundable deposit required to enroll for the G.I. Bill, Solnit says the military uses this deposit as “a retention factor [so that] people stay in for their full eight-year term.” Recruits are more likely to stay in the military if they risk losing their deposit or if they risk qualifying for their promised college benefits.

It’s been almost 35 years since the military switched to an “all volunteer” force. When it did so, it dropped the generous and deserved benefits that were granted to previous generations.

As long as the military continues to lie to and mislead prospective recruits—whether in person or via a text message with a pop culture allusion and a friendly emoticon—today’s kids will continue to shun military service. By doing so, they are heeding the government’s implicit message: As an Army of one, you’re better off joining Blackwater. ■

## [ art space ]



### Art from the Cuckoo's Nest

Known as a “schizophrenic artist,” Mexican-born Martín Ramírez, produced his body of work in American mental institutions, where he spent the last 32 years of his 68-year life. Because he lacked formal materials, the self-taught artist (who died in 1963) created his drawings from whatever was available to him, including food products, candy wrappers, crayons and tongue depressors. His drawings depict images of his previous life as a Mexican landowner, as well as images of religious figures, landscapes, trains and tunnels. The Milwaukee Art Museum is hosting a unique 20-year retrospective of Ramírez’s work through Jan. 13. For more information, visit [www.mam.org](http://www.mam.org).

—Chelsea Ross



## BOOKS

# Prairie Style Romance

By Achy Obejas

**I**F NANCY HORAN had presented the ending of her novel, *Loving Frank* (Ballantine), in a workshop, or if perhaps she'd stricken the historical names and pawned this as pure invention, it would have likely been considered an excellent example of *deus ex machina*. "Oh, *please*," the reader would say. "You're going to create these fascinating, complex characters, fill reams with exquisite period detail and reflections on architecture and feminism, increase the tension to such an incredible degree ... and then ... *this*?"

We'd feel cheated.

But life tends to defy the conventions of literature and art, to sometimes embrace the illogical, the impossible, the too obvious. And so *Loving Frank*—which is, paradoxically enough, an elegant and sober work—cannot end neatly.

Horan's work is a novel, but it is the story of two real lives: Frank Lloyd Wright's and Mamah Borthwick Cheney's. And though Horan takes great liberty in imagining intimate scenes between the two—of which there is no evidence—*Loving Frank* ultimately rests on historical record. The ending—which I won't spoil—is horrific because it was horrific. It's senseless because, yes, it was senseless.

In 1903, Mamah was a teacher and translator with far greater intellectual gifts than her role as housewife could satisfy. It was her husband, Ed Cheney, who hired Wright to design a new home for them in Oak Park, Ill., where architecture's enfant terrible also then resided. During the construction of the house, Wright and Mamah shared a great deal of time together (Ed was at work so she oversaw the project) and eventually the two fell in love. It takes a couple of years to consummate that attraction, but Horan doesn't withhold—or delay—that information. The tension she builds, however, is less titillating and much more powerful. How do two married people with children deal with such a thing at a time when divorce is an alien concept?

But the real meat of the story is how far two people are willing to go, not just for love, but for a love of equals. Horan proposes that an intellectual ardor, a meeting



Newspaper clippings from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* from top left to right: Aug 6, 1911; Nov 9, 1909; Dec 31, 1911; Dec 24, 1911.

of the minds as much as of souls is what really bound Wright and Mamah. Wright may have been a world-renowned genius but she was no slouch. A translator and promoter of feminist ideals, Mamah ignores his arrogance and rationalizes his rudeness (and the reader gets the feeling that Horan does, too).

But where the two most engage and match is in their talk about art and nature. Fortunately, Horan doesn't let it get too out there. Mostly, she paraphrases these conversations, but we get the idea from what snippets she imagines for us:

"Nature is everything to the Japanese," he said. "When they build a house, they face it toward the garden."

"I knew Japan had influenced you," she said. "I didn't realize how much." She thought she saw him flinch. "You don't like the word 'influenced,' do you?"

"Hate it, actually. Beaux Arts snobs—the academics—use it."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry. But I want you to understand. Nobody's influenced me. Why should I copy the Japanese or the Aztecs or anybody else when I can make something beautiful of my own? It all comes from here." He tapped a finger on one temple. "And from nature."

Horan is faithful to the historical record, but let's be clear about what that means. Although, during his life, Wright wrote an autobiography and many books about ar-

# ARCHITECT WRIGHT IN NEW ROMANCE WITH 'MRS. CHENEY'

Found at Spring Green, Wis.,  
in Bungalow He Designed  
for Them Himself.

WOMAN CHANGED HER NAME

"Mrs. Cheney Never Existed for Me,  
I'm Taking Care of Mamah  
Borthwick," He Wires.

chitecture,  
he barely mentioned Mamah. Historians—  
and even descendants of his Oak Park  
neighbors—respected his near silence.  
Mamah was a badly kept secret, but be-  
fore Horan, the image of her was blurry.

What Horan is most loyal to is the his-  
torical period and the strict outline of  
Wright's and Mamah's lives. Her research  
included newspapers and other publica-  
tions—Wright and Mamah were pursued  
by what might be comparable to today's  
paparazzi—and the works of others, in-  
cluding at least one master's thesis that  
focused on Mamah's influence—oh, that  
word!—on Wright's architecture. But  
from what Horan explains in an after-  
word, she gained a true sense of Mamah  
from 10 letters she wrote to Ellen Key, a  
Swedish feminist for whom Mamah did  
some translations.

In an age when news organizations  
take liberties with facts, it's oddly com-  
forting that a novel—a work of fiction, no  
less—takes pains to unearth historical re-  
ality. And when those facts interrupt our  
literary expectations, it can shake us up in  
unexpected ways.

It also means that when Horan pauses  
to imagine, we instinctively believe her.  
Yes, it's a matter of faith, but this, after all,  
is a love story, and few things in life re-  
quire more faith than love. ■

## MEDIA

### R.I.P. *LiP*

By Erin Polgreen

**T**HESE DAYS, IT ain't easy being indy.  
The last 12 months have seen the  
demise of *Clamor*, *Punk Planet*, *Sa-  
tya* and *LiP*. Not only have we lost a set  
of publications committed to the cultiva-  
tion of progressive thought, intriguing  
activism and culture-jamming, but we  
have also lost four great forums of initia-  
tion for the next generation of thinkers  
and activists.

Thank heavens AK Press has stepped  
up to fill the gap. This fall, the anarchist  
publishing house released *Tipping the  
Sacred Cow: The Best of LiP*. It's a com-  
fort to know that *LiP*'s unorthodox jour-  
nalistic approach now has the potential  
to reach new audiences.

*Tipping the Sacred Cow* is a savvy and  
well-curated collection of the comics, il-  
lustrations, articles and interviews fea-  
tured in *LiP*'s myriad print and online  
incarnations from 1996-2007. Capturing  
the magazine's cheeky nature, it reads  
like a super-special edition of *LiP*—

complete with illustrations by cartoon-  
ist Eric Drooker, a "theft ethics" quiz, a  
glossary of culture-jamming lingo and  
other useful appendices—including  
some exclusive, behind-the-scenes, pre-  
viously unpublished material.

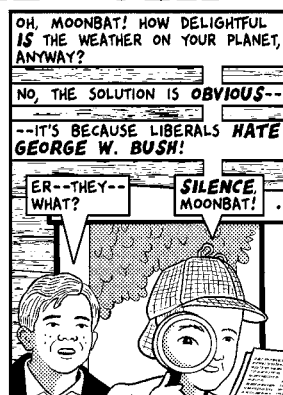
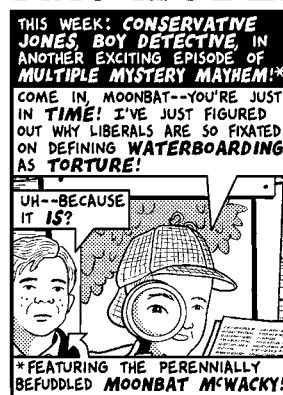
Goodies aside, this collection ap-  
proaches all of the left's sacred cows with  
verve—from hip-hop activism and anti-  
globalization to environmentalism and  
radical queer activism. Though some ar-  
ticles in the compilation are nearing 10  
years old, the material is still fresh and  
relevant. Jennifer Whitney's "Make Me-  
dia, Make Real Trouble: What's Wrong  
and Right With Indymedia" (June 2005)  
particularly resonates in these dark  
days for independent publications.

"People don't read sloppy, unedited or  
disorganized stories," Whitney writes,  
referring to the profusion of poor con-  
tent on Indymedia websites. "They don't  
look at bad photographs or videos. And  
so the potential to have an impact is  
greatly diminished. Simply put, an un-  
read article changes nothing."

While the Internet is a tremendous re-  
source for organizing and activism, our  
increased reliance on social networking

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW





sites, blogs and other marginally edited transmissions thwarts the production of inventive, imaginative and investigative articles from the left. That decrease in quality alienates potential audiences.

Technology has shored up diverse ideas and activist networks—i.e. the online organizing efforts for the Jena Six— but few groups attract allies outside their niche. Well-executed and thought-out journals can function as “spokespeople” for nascent movements, engaging participants with the theories, activism and ideas needed to further movements.

*LiP* addressed these difficulties head on. In his introduction to the anthology, founder Brian Awehali writes that *LiP*’s purpose was to “spur different conversations, generate different frames and attract people who, frankly, feel stultified by a lot of U.S. progressive and radical media.”

One of the most intriguing pieces in *Tipping the Sacred Cow* is “Sweatshop-Produced Rainbow Flags and Participatory Patriarchy: Why the Gay Rights Movement is a Sham,” by self-described radical queer activist Mattilda, a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore.

The essay addresses the concern of assimilation and homogeneity within American queer culture and asks what is lost when marginalized social groups compromise their core identities in favor of acceptance. Abstractly, these are interesting questions, but when used to argue against gay marriage as a symbol of oppression, the piece exemplifies the kind of thought-provoking work that was *LiP* at its best.

Similarly great entries include Lisa Jervis’ “If Women Ruled the World, Nothing Would be Different” and an interview with Christopher Hitchens about his book, *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice*.

Though its print circulation peaked at around 4,000 readers, *LiP* was a training ground for many of today’s young writers, thinkers, artists and activists—many of whom have gone on to work for other publications. *In These Times* included. Mattilda is now an editor for *Make/Shift*, one of the most promising entries into the print world since *LiP*’s untimely passing. Other notable authors and interviewees in *Tipping the Sacred Cow* include Jeff Chang, damali ayo, Kari Lydersen and Neelanjana Banerjee.

Not everything in *Tipping* sparkles. Neal Pollack, of *Alternadad* fame, is decidedly lackluster with his satirical “I

## excerpt



### NO RED MEAT FOR THE BASE

*In The Contenders (Seven Stories Press, 2008), six writers take an unvarnished look at the leading Democratic presidential candidates. Below, Eli Sanders and Dan Savage examine the unlikely electoral prospects of Citizen Kucinich in the Carniverous States of America:*

Is America ready for its first vegan president?

Please.

Maybe its first woman president. Perhaps a black president. Possibly even a Latino president. And, as Chris Rock pointed out, we’ve got a retarded president right now. But a guy who faults a cheeseburger on two counts, the meat and the cheese? A *vegan* president? No fucking way. Don’t be retarded.

And most certainly not this particular vegan, Ohio congressman Dennis Kucinich. This is a candidate who announces, on national television, that he would refuse to shoot a Hellfire missile at Osama bin Laden if given the opportunity; a guy who prattles on about the interconnectedness of humanity and his plans for creating a cabinet-level Department of Peace; a man who brags about the wonderfully low blood pressure his animal-cruelty-free diet has brought him (memo to the Kucinich campaign: Americans like their leaders carnivorous and on the verge of cardiac arrest, thank you very much—see, for example, our last two presidents, Bill Clinton and Dick Cheney.)

Sure, it might be unfair, a cosmetic and karmic injustice even, that Kucinich, who was more right about the Iraq War than most Democrats (and, for the record, more right than one of the meat-eating authors of this vegan-bashing profile), now has less chance of being president than U.S. troops have of stumbling across those alleged Iraqi WMDs.

But that’s the way we roll here in America.

This is a country in which some people still believe that there is some sort of dignified way out of Iraq—“home with honor” is how the pollsters and strategists describe the widespread sentiment—and, delusional or not, these Americans don’t see much “honor” in our troops marching out of the Middle East on the orders of a five-foot-seven, turn-the-other-cheek waif who flashes peace signs without irony and wouldn’t eat a steak with the boys once they’re back home.

None of this stops Kucinich, however. Long odds never have. He soldiers on (sorry, too militaristic?), making his second consecutive run at the White House, and no more likely to win this time around than in 2004.



Love to Burn the Flag,” and almost all of the anthology’s fiction and prose pieces come off as trite retreads rather than sacred cattle prods.

When compared to *LiP*’s other articles on gender and sexuality, pieces like “Gender Ninja, Gender Pirate” fall flat in their attempts to shock with laughable lines like, “What was the difference between piracy and cultural appropriation? If you

asked the gender pirate that question, you’d get a poke in the eye and a kick between the legs.”

The missteps, however, are rare. From *LiP*’s staff-wide treatise on the ethics of poop to the misuses of renewable energy on Indian reservations, *Tipping the Sacred Cow* serves as a worthy headstone for a publication that died before its time. ■



BY TERRY J. ALLEN

# U.S. Lobbyists Assault E.U. Regs



**I**RAQ IS NOT the only place that is handing the United States its ass.

The European Union surpassed America in 2005 to become the world's largest, richest economy. America's former dominance had made

it the global arbiter of health and safety standards, but its decline may be the best news in a long time.

The E.U. is wielding its market clout to compel producers, including U.S. corporate giants, to eliminate toxic ingredients. REACH, the E.U. regulations that govern chemical use and production, recently forced Procter & Gamble to exclude suspected endocrine disruptors and carcinogens from its products. As detailed in Mark Schapiro's new book, *Exposed: The Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Products and What's at Stake for American Power*, Procter & Gamble, while insisting its original line was safe, is now marketing many of the E.U. formulas in America.

Why is the United States, which practically invented consumer protection, now lagging behind the E.U., and in some cases, trailing Japan, China and Mexico? For one thing, Europe applies the precautionary principle, which requires that products be proven safe *before* release. In the United States, regulatory agencies shift the burden of proof by assuming products are safe unless proven dangerous. By this method, body counts often end up proving risk.

U.S. industry argues that America doesn't need the precautionary principle because it has a tort system that, by allowing large punitive damages, deters companies from releasing harmful products. (The estimated 44,000 dead from FDA-approved Vioxx no doubt rest assured.) The disingenuousness of

this argument is laid bare by the millions of dollars corporations spend lobbying for tort "reform" legislation to limit company liability and consumer damages.

Armies of corporate lobbyists fill the troughs of both political parties: The main dish is campaign contributions, followed by a rich dessert of revolving-door corporate jobs for bureaucrats and the defeated or retiring politicians who played ball by accepting shoddy data, quashing investigations, or undermining legislation and regulation.

Predictably, an army of U.S. lobbyists invaded the E.U. following its rise in regulatory power. In October, a news organization called ChemicalWatch warned that "the cost of implementing REACH could run into billions of dollars for U.S. industry and escalate significantly unless companies work together." ChemicalWatch, a self-described "business guide to REACH," is half right.

The European Commission estimates that REACH will cost the EU \$4 billion to \$7.5 billion over 11 years, but it will also save \$78 billion over 30 years because of fewer illnesses from chemical exposures. When University College London factored in production loss, the 30-year savings topped \$400 billion.

Under European health plans, those savings are public, which means that society has a huge financial stake in preventing illness by reining in corporations. The United States, on the other hand, with private insurance and hospitals, lacks the organized, powerful constituencies that can insist that public savings in health costs trump corporate profits.

One of industries' greatest allies is a blame-the-victim approach to public health. U.S. government agencies regularly present cancer prevention as a personal lifestyle responsibility—eat your veggies, exercise, get screened—rather than as an imperative to define carcinogens and ban those likely to

harm, no matter what it costs industry.

But the U.S. model is gaining ground. A recent headline in Britain's *Independent* read, "Unveiled: radical prescription for our health crisis." The article reported on London's new embrace of lifestyle solutions, and highlighted the British government's proposal to concentrate on personal strategies for losing weight and quitting smoking, while ignoring the issue of toxic chemicals that the public ingests.

The E.U., however, seems determined to examine those health consequences by requiring testing on new products, as well as on many of the 62,000 chemicals—including benzenes and furans—that Washington grandfathered in without review under the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), virtually admitting that it is gambling with public health in a rigged game, calls its risk assessment software Monte Carlo. Never has the adage garbage-in, garbage-out had more literal and lethal implications. As Schapiro notes, "The more variables the EPA puts into Monte Carlo—genetics, behavior, alleged flaws in the scientific method to assess toxicity, benefits vs. cost—the less predictable the outcome, the less clear the danger." And the more subject to bias.

That uncertainty—even putting aside conflicts of interest—is why the precautionary principle is so critical. It is one thing to bet your life on an experimental drug when no other therapy exists. It is another to let corporations weigh the cost of potential lawsuits against the benefits of a quick profit from shinier lipstick, nastier pesticides or snack food with longer shelf life.

My heart (and liver) is betting on the E.U. My brain worries that corporations will put profits first. ■

**CONTACT** Terry J. Allen at [tallen@igc.org](mailto:tallen@igc.org)

# classified

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# Wingnut Week

Continued from back page

agree were heinous. Then he suggested America cannot negotiate constructively with Iranian leaders because the regime has already declared war by killing our soldiers in Iraq. With that, his testimony devolved into propaganda for the current war in Iraq and a future war in Iran.

Fakhravar maintained that the Iraq War had weakened terrorism abroad. He slammed the “academic view” of Professor Scott Hibbard, who was a third panelist, for his lack of “realism” and belittled a student who suggested that such testimony could be used to lay the groundwork for a U.S. invasion.

Every dodge or denigrating insinuation from Spencer and Fakhravar riled the offended, emotional and self-righteous student activists in attendance. On multiple occasions, DCA members wrestled the microphone from the grip of a loudly indignant protester, who had thus rendered his or her potentially poignant question worthless. One student overshot his 30-second time limit and was escorted out of the room by two burly men, neither of whom seemed interested in American foreign policy. And political devotees from both sides of the spectrum booed and hissed every critical challenge.

Spencer and Fakhravar’s DePaul visit was not an anomalous event. On the same day, students across the country kicked off IFAW, the Horowitz-led effort to confront “two big ideas of the Academic Left.” First, that Bush created the war on terror. And, second, that global warming is a larger risk than Islamic terrorism.

“We think that radical Islamic terrorism is the greatest threat that America and other Western nations are facing,” says Mick Paskiewicz, a DePaul sophomore and vice president of DCA, a student group described as “a non-partisan organization that promotes all flavors of conservatism.”

“What we hoped to do was clarify what that threat is and where it’s coming from,” says Paskiewicz.

Modeled after tactics of the ’60s anti-war movement, to which the one-time-Maoist-turned-neoconservative Horowitz is no stranger, conservatives on more than 100 campuses organized a five-day binge of demonstrations, speaking engagements and sit-ins. Many of the workshops focused on the persecution

of Islamic women, an issue on which Horowitz and his comrades believe the academy is resolutely silent. But their criticism ignores loads of academic research examining the treatment of women in Muslim nations, like Riffat Hassan’s studies of Pakistani honor killings at the University of Louisville and Abdullahi An-Naim’s work on religion and human rights at Emory University, to name two.

Iran toward nuclear enrichment. They could have studied how Western imperialism—and, more recently, American involvement—helped radicalize Muslim jihadists. Hell, they could have scrutinized Horowitz’s motivation for using the term “Islamofascism”—an ahistorical, over-generalized neologism that alienates potential allies.

But IFAW does not exist to promote

## Islamofascism Awareness Week treated us to the spectacle of Ann Coulter and Rick Santorum—heroes of feminists everywhere—decrying the left’s ‘silence’ on the abuse of Islamic women.

Such pesky evidence didn’t stop right-wing commentator Ann Coulter and former Republican Sen. Rick Santorum—heroes of feminists everywhere—from making their pitch at several colleges. The Young Americans for Freedom chapter at Michigan State University upped the ante, inviting British neo-Nazi and Holocaust denier Nick Griffin to East Lansing. Elsewhere, students showed documentaries about “the Islamofascist crusade against America,” and passed out pamphlets like “The Islamic Mein Kampf” and “Jimmy Carter’s War Against the Jews.”

To its credit, the DCA tried to foster a more amicable atmosphere by promoting the week’s events under the less-controversial banner “Terrorism Awareness Week.” It also offered Hibbard a chance to present a dissenting opinion, which he used to eloquently downplay ideology in favor of an understanding of U.S.-Iranian tension through the broader lens of regional power and control of natural resources. But giving Fakhravar and Spencer such a prominent platform—and the vast majority of speaking time—legitimized their fringe positions and invalidated the students’ attempt to raise consciousness about the dangers of terrorism.

If awareness was, in fact, the intention, the DCA and its chosen speakers could have analyzed a politically and religiously divided Muslim world. They could have questioned how, if Islam is inherently violent, nearly 1.5 billion people study and worship the religion peacefully. They could have considered Middle Eastern tensions pragmatically, focusing less on religious fundamentalism and more on the incentives that push countries like

the exchange of ideas. Rather, it creates a facile dichotomy between Good and Evil, exemplified by Horowitz’s petition drive designed to force students and faculty “to declare their allegiances: either to fighting our terrorist adversaries or failing to take action to stop our enemies.” This intensifies fear and Muslim xenophobia, both of which are tools in the neoconservative strategy to build public and legislative support for imperial actions. And when members of the left protest these efforts, the right paints a caricature of them as naive and weak, lacking the fortitude to ignore the “PC police” and smoke those terrorists out of their holes.

IFAW deliberately blurs the diversity of Muslim identity and blocks the intellectual dialogue folks like Spencer purport to seek. No wonder one-third of Americans still believe Saddam Hussein was “personally involved” in 9/11, according to a September *New York Times*/CBS News poll.

I didn’t learn a great deal about Salafists or jihadists during IFAW, but I did take away a message central to the evening’s discussion. “If you’re not offended four or more times a day on campus,” DCA President Nicholas Hahn III warned the audience, “you should probably ask for your money back.”

That statement reveals how conservatives view the role of higher education. It is not an impassive search to deepen, broaden, and complicate our understanding of the world, but a commodity that should titillate or anger. And that makes sense: Calm, rational people do not rush to join irrational demagogues—at home and abroad—who beckon us toward never-ending war. ■



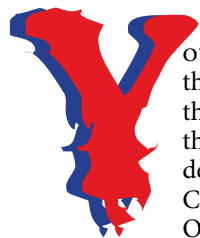
# WINGNUT

## aawareness week



## Neocons beat the war drum on college campuses

BY ADAM DOSTER



YOU KNOW THAT FEELING people get when they drive past a car accident? It's clear that the wreckage is terrifying, but they can't bring themselves to look away. That's how I felt wandering into DePaul University's Cortelyou Commons on a rainy Chicago night in mid-October to attend "War With Iran?" Organized by the DePaul Conservative Alliance (DCA), this panel presentation kicked off the university's opening contribution to Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week (IFAW), a nationwide campaign sponsored by the David Horowitz Freedom Center. For some masochistic reason, I had to see this wingnut carnival for myself.

To describe the evening's panelists as wacky would be an understatement. Amir Abbas Fakhrahar is a self-proclaimed "Iranian student dissident leader," who has been embraced by neoconservatives like Richard Perle and Michael Ledeen as an authority on the Iranian regime's ruthlessness. Their support for him comes in spite of—perhaps because of—his dubious biography and reputation as an opportunist. In fact, Iranian journalists, student activists and former inmates told *Mother Jones'* Laura Rozen that Iranian police arrested Fakhrahar for a nonpolitical crime and that he took on the identity of a political prisoner once behind bars. When I emailed Ali Moaz-zami—a former editor at *Shargh*, a popular liberal newspaper in Iran that the regime shut down in August—for his opinion

of Fakhrahar, he replied, in all caps, "NOT ANY IMPORTANT [STUDENT] GROUP TAKES HIM SERIOUSLY."

Next to Fakhrahar sat Robert Spencer, the founder and director of the website Jihad Watch and the author of six books that blame the teachings and practice of Islam for producing Islamic terrorism.

For those in the audience who came to the panel looking to be offended (I'd guess 60 percent), Spencer did not disappoint. He chastised the left for its inability to hold discussions without "violent intransigence and smears." He ranted about the obstinately violent nature of Islam. He bullied the first questioner, forcing the student to define neoconservatism on the spot. And he suggested that people protesting his writing were "abetting in the persecution" of Muslims.

When someone asked an insightful question about how best to deal with inflexible ideologues, he ducked it. My favorite quirk was Spencer's insistence on quoting—four times—a line from Pope Benedict XVI's 2006 lecture at the University of Regensburg in Germany: "To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind, or any other means of threatening a person with death." He neglected to share that during this talk the Pope also said: "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman."

Fakhrahar was hardly better. He recounted the treatment he was subjected to in Iran, abuses that everyone in the room could

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